

# This Old House

KITCHEN +  
BATH SPECIAL

Our favorite  
low-cost  
upgrades

## 47 feel-good makeovers

- > CHEERFUL COLORS
- > CHARMING DETAILS
- > BEST NEW PRODUCTS

Color  
splash  
the bath!  
p. 86

Plus!

Buyer's  
guide to  
pro-style  
ranges

The  
ultimate  
garden  
bench

CLEAN  
SWEEP!  
BEST WAYS  
TO BUST  
HOUSEHOLD DUST  
p. 24

MAY 2014  
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# Contents

THIS OLD HOUSE MAY 2014

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SEE THE FULL LIST OF CONTENTS  
ON PAGE 100

## KITCHEN + BATH SPECIAL *Feel-good makeovers*

### idea file

- 20 **before + after kitchen** An 1870s cottage each square gets a bright, cherry refresher
- 26 **before + after bath** Dirty becomes dreamy thanks to handsome new fixtures and classic details
- 44 **problem-solvers and cool finds** Must-have new products for kitchen and bath
- 68 **hidden beauty** A simple one-pot overnight scrub, filthy carpets, and away with it to turn a house of two into one
- 76 **DIY lessons from Mom** When it comes to making home-improvement advice, Mom's the word
- 80 **25 creative kitchen upgrades** Smart ways to add some oomph without breaking the bank
- 86 **20 budget-friendly bath ideas** Consider them on the cheap with these inspiring enhancement tips



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29  
BEFORE  
& AFTER  
KITCHEN



59  
WEEKEND  
REMODEL



35  
BEFORE  
& AFTER  
BATH

17  
HOME  
SOLUTIONS



## home solutions

- 17 **Toss some crates onto** chiseling nail storage, 30 uses for leftover kitchen gadgets you'll need when the power goes out, 30 inside a closet library, backpack-friendly built-ins and more

## TOH TV

- 29 **perfect fit for a family** At the current project house, a space-expanding renovation reveals the house's personality while giving the owners the roominess they need

## upgrades

- 35 **build it or buy it** Folding sawtooth  
41 **all about** Pro style mugs

## how-to projects

- 43 **paint ideas** Six concepts a colorful checkerboard design inspire up a blind kitchen  
47 **weekend remodel** Show your garden old and handsome a compact bench

## ask this old house

- 47 **Q+A** Don't let mold crush your veggie garden dreams, care for crumbling outdoor benches, crown molding fire's sassy on blog and more  
114 **Norm's tricks of the trade** Construction conundrums for remodelers

## IN EVERY ISSUE

- 4 reader mail  
4 digital highlights  
11 Ask for This Old House  
12 chatter  
16 directory  
17 save this old house



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# Reader mail

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**TOH READERS** are perpetual students. The mail we've seen tells us you love to learn the history of your homes and appreciate the little details—and apparently this curiosity starts very young! Plus, a reader project that rated the curb appeal of a simple ranch.

### Wish books and home

On my fourth and through the March 2014 issue, I really looked at the home in *PhotoShop Radio* (find it at [theoldhouse.com/mag/2014-03](http://theoldhouse.com/mag/2014-03)). I recognized it as a Sears model called the Glen Falls. We are very partial to Sears catalog homes because we live in an original Sears Allouezville, built by my great-grandparents.

Thanks for putting out such a quality publication and one inspiring to the preservation of historical America.  
—CHRIS (CHICKEN) RICHARD PHILIP, S.D.

### New life for old skeletons

[Re: Ask The Old House, March 2014] Quite an interesting article on how to make a working skeleton key. While some houses with old locks may have used the same key in all doors, as you suggest, the house I just sold, built in 1919, had a different key for every

interior door. The keys still exist, too.  
—ANN TRIMMER (BYE MAE)

### TOH Junior

My husband and I are amazed with our first-grader's reading ability. He took *The Cat in the Hat* into the bathroom with him the other day. Through the door, I answered his questions about what badgers are, where you buy watercooler, how you hang wallpaper. It's so exciting to watch the world open up to him, and if he wants to read this magazine, I'll help with the hard words. Of course, now he thinks he can build a house—I think I'll leave that lesson to my husband!

—MARIKANGORRUE, NEW BEDFORD, CONN.

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**Spiffed-up ranch**  
MAJOR RENOVATION KITCHENING OHIO

Inspired by a *PhotoShop Radio* you did (above right), I dressed up the front of my place. I used steady with the window graphics (right). After a week, I was amazed, since the front door and windows directly about the south. Thanks for the idea! (Find this Radio at [theoldhouse.com/mag/2014-03](http://theoldhouse.com/mag/2014-03))

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**TABLET**

**Bonus features**

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**HOW TO VIDEO**

**How to clean and  
re-stain a deck**

Breathe new life into your weather-beaten boards with these pro tips from This Old House general contractor Tom Silva. See how he does it at [thisoldhouse.com/may2014](http://thisoldhouse.com/may2014)



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finish reading  
this magazine,  
this crack  
could be  
patched,  
primed,  
painted,  
and  
a distant  
memory



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## Letter FROM THIS OLD HOUSE

### Mother knows best

**“W**hy don't you—  
“Mom...  
“I'm just saying you should—  
“Mother...  
“It's just that—  
“MA!”

You're probably already guessed, but that was a recent exchange between my mom and me. A fairly typical exchange, especially when I'm doing something DIY-ish around the house and she's poking around where it's not really necessary for her to poke.

It's her way of offering advice: Whether I want it or not. And it usually comes at that crucial stage when I've dropped and scooped to pick up the tiny little screw for the third or fourth time and am on a ladder struggling overhead, with a too-tired arm, to get that screw inserted in its hole. In other words, the frustration is high, the tolerance for suggestion is low, and the desire to be an orphan is strong.

Which isn't to say that I've always wanted to be a word of the mom. In fact, through the years I've learned many useful lessons, particularly around home improvement, from my mother. The biggest lesson, I think, was a certain work ethic. That was absorbed from watching her, a single mother of three boys, forced to leave homecoming to become a paperhanger, using the only skill she had that she knew she could support us with. And I know that because of it, she had lots of her own up-and-downs on the ladder and too-tired arms. She got that attitude, I think, from her mother, my grandmother Olive, whom I've mentioned to you before, particularly her propensity to climb to the roof and clean our gutters well into her late 80s.

Of course, my regular reader of *Tim O'Leary* certainly knows there is an shortage of women who do the hard work at home. And that same reader knows I'm not the only member of the TOH family who has learned a thing or two from dear old Mom. Which is why, this being the May issue, and May being the calendaric home to Mother's Day, it seemed only natural to let some readers share with us what they learned from their own mom.

You'll find the best of that advice in “DIY Lessons From Mom,” on page 76, and a few of their more nostalgic photos at right. Maybe those readers' stories will spur memories of lessons well learned as the apron mom—I mean, tool help—of your own dear mother. If so, we'll love to hear them. Like us on Facebook and post your favorite DIY advice from Mom on our wall. We'll showcase our favorite entries online in celebration of Mother's Day.

*Scott O'Leary*  
SCOTT O'LEARY, EDITOR  
scott@theoldhouse.com



LEFT: The writer and Primrose Auld, getting into his place, around 2006. BELOW: Liza and his brother Tim O'Leary got started early, circa 1970.



RIGHT: Tim O'Leary, Editor/Publisher and his handy mom, Bonnie, in 1958. BELOW: Michael O'Leary, author of *Tim O'Leary's*, an early magazine, back in 1977. Find their stories on page 76.





# Checklist

MAY 2014

*Easy ways to  
improve your home  
right now*

## 6 FAST FIXES

☐ **Move heavy plants outside**  
After the last frost and once nighttime temps reach 50 degrees F, it's safe to start gradually acclimating plants to the outdoors over a period of a few weeks.



☐ **Rethrow old paintbrushes**  
Clean a few old paintbrushes by soaking brushes in hot white vinegar, then washing them in warm, soapy water.

☐ **Shield wood floors from sun**  
Prevent uneven floor fading by repositioning furniture and area rugs.

☐ **Summer-proof your grass**  
Giving your lawn a deep watering once a week encourages strong root growth that will help grass withstand summer droughts.

☐ **Touch up exterior paint**  
Before heat and humidity set in, refresh peeling or scuffed paint on your trim or front door.

☐ **Check your fridge's seal**  
Give a refrigerator with a tight seal some TLC to clean the gasket regularly with a damp sponge. Test the seal by closing the fridge on dollar bill, then trying to pull it out. If the bill slides out easily, it may be time to order a replacement seal from the manufacturer.

## Attract

### hummingbirds

Many of these pretty pollinators migrate north for spring breeding. To bring them to your yard, plant nectar-rich tubular blooms, like the salvia pictured at right, and set out hummingbird feeders. A moving water source, like a mister or bubbler, also helps lure hummingbirds; place one near trees and shrubs, where they are likely to seek shelter.



## Clean your screens

It's time for some fresh air! Shake the exterior by hosing screens before you throw open the windows. To wash, remove the screens and scrub using dish soap and a sponge or soft-bristled brush, then rinse. If you can't remove the screens, try bottled outdoor cleaner that attaches to your hose to spray them clean from afar.



## Wash and protect outdoor furniture

Mold and mildew thrive in wet spring weather, so give wood, plastic and metal furniture a good cleaning.



alcan start by washing them thoroughly with dish detergent and a soft-bristled brush. If you want to keep the wood from graying, wait until it's dry, then sand lightly and apply a water-repellent sealant that has a UV protectant.

☐ **Give a Mother's Day garden.**  
Rather than a short-lived bouquet, offer Mom a whole season's bounty. Peppers, tomatoes, pumpkins, and cucumbers are all best keeps best planted in warm



spring weather, so let your local nursery for seedlings that are ready to be put directly in the ground. Before the end of summer, she'll have a garden full of edible gifts to share.



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# home solutions

Edited by Michelle Brunner

INSIDE

10 USES

PAINT MAKEOVER

EMERGENCY GEAR

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MORE



## Wine-crate storage

It's not often we tell our readers to hit the liquor store, but the crates used to make these wood shelves are freebies from the winery. It's a thrifty way to bring some stylish storage into your cook space. They're also a cinch to assemble. Just call local wine sellers to see if and when they put crates on the curb for customers. You may need to remove staples and sand rough edges. We used a light, teardrop stain (Dunn-Edwards in Gambeck) on the wood to ensure that the vintage's imprint could still be seen. Then we attached them to the wall with iron brackets (16 each; at home centers) for a storage solution worth raising a glass to.

PHOTO: JAMES WHITE; STYLING: MICHELLE BRUNNER



## Wood lattice

These crisscrossed panels can do more than skirt a porch or hold up vines. Let them step out from their supporting role with these clever uses



**1- Edge a flower bed.** Cut pressure-treated lattice panels into 8-inch-wide strips. Frame beds with lattice cap, or C-rail (a chamfered edging for lattice). Coat with exterior paint. Attach stakes and mulch.

**2- Paint a pattern.** Use lattice as a stencil for spraying an allover squares or diamonds.

**3- Trim furniture.** Add detail to a plain table by attaching knurlings of lattice in the corners. Place two lengths of 2x4 in each corner to act as braces behind the lattice, and fasten. Seal the lattice with the corner braces. Paint as desired.



**4- Use as wallpapering.** Cut panels where the lattice intersects to a typical wainscot height (about 36 inches). Set lattice on top of base molding and attach to the walls with nails and panel adhesive. Cap with rabbet molding.

**5- Store garden tools.** Screw a rectangular piece of lattice onto two 2x4s and attach to the back of a shed door. Use rip ties as loops for hanging rakes, shovels, and other garden gear.



**6- Get building materials off the ground.** Make a right angle from two 2x4s and join them with a triangular piece of lattice to form a bracket. Screw brackets into the wall, spaced a few feet apart. Stake pipes and molding through the openings.

**7- Fashion a pot rack.** Frame spaces of sturdy lattice with 2x4s. Screw eye hooks into ceiling joists and into the wood frame. Connect the eye hooks with chain. Attach S-hooks to the lattice to hang light pots.



**8- Make a memo board.** Cut a piece of plywood to size and cover it with batting and fabric. Secure with a staple gun. Tack a piece of lattice on top with brad nails. Tuck paint swatches and the like into the openings.

**9- Create a decorative lining.** Layer painted lattice over a glass or mirrored panel in a cabinet door.

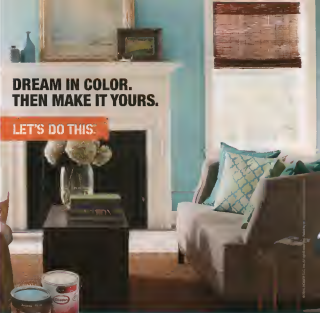


**10- Make a trivet.** Cover a square of lattice with heat-resistant paint and use it to protect your countertop from hot pots and pans.

—KATIE HELLER

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## Power-outage essentials

Stormy weather accounts for more than 60 percent of electrical outages. Your best defense against the dark: handy gadgets that will help you and your family get through the night without leaving you feeling so...powerless. Here, find expert picks for what you should have on hand in case the lights go out. —MELANIE K.



**ALL-WEATHER RADIO:** This trusty device beeps your smartphone when it starts to deliver critical emergency warnings. Thanks to three different power sources—battery, solar, and hand crank—you'll never be stranded for news updates. \$43. [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



**CELL-PHONE CHARGER:** Without working outlets, your cell may be bound to deliver big trouble if you need to make an emergency call. Consider a charger that powers up via a manual crank (\$70, [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)) or battery-powered one that can hold a full charge for up to a year (\$60, [hamradio.com](http://hamradio.com)).



**CAN OPENER AND LIGHTER:** If you're relying on paper plates for food, a manual can opener is a necessity (\$14, [cost.com](http://cost.com)). Keep a lighter on hand, too. It could save your life if you get stuck in the dark. \$12. [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



**WATERPROOF LANTERN:** Lanterns are a lifesaver when you're stuck in the house, but they might not provide enough light to safely illuminate a room. Choose a durable lantern that's also easy to use in any condition. \$99. [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



## Is that garage-sale find worth your time?

Great deals on second-hand furniture are plentiful at yard sales. But don't let a wedge that wags back into your car just yet. Make sure you're getting a piece worth restoring with these tips from Amanda Brown, author of the new guide *Scrap: A Step-by-Step Guide to Upholstery and Design*.

**ASSESS THE BONES:** High-quality pieces are often marked down and a layer of dirty, torn fabric. Carved wood, downcast horns and cast-iron springs are good signs that you've found a gem in the rough. Delivery of a wobbly frame (repairs can get costly) and steel coils of pieces that were stored outdoors—they could have mold or termite damage.

**DO THE MATH:** Before you buy, measure the piece to make sure it will fit in the room you have in mind. Call around to get a rough quote for upholstery, too. Depending on where you live, you can spend \$350 to \$700 to restore a large chair and around \$1,000 for a sofa—not including the cost of fabric.

**KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT:** If you hire a pro, make sure the price includes the installation of new padding and the labor for retying coil springs. If you're tempted to tackle the project yourself, Brown recommends a generous stapler and a hand upholstery tool kit (\$169, [diyupholstery.com](http://diyupholstery.com)). No sewing savvy? No worries. There's actually very little sewing involved—you'll mostly just smooth and staple fabric, she says. Which eases the prospect of restoring that wobbly chair less daunting. —PAUL HOLT

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK; CHAIR: ELIZABETH H. GOODMAN

## CLASSIC WOOD LOOK WITHOUT THE WOOD WORRY.

LET'S DO THIS.

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## PROJECT OF THE WEEK

### HOW TO BUILD A GARDEN TOOLS SHED

All the rust-resistant coating in the world won't save your garden tools if you leave them outside all the time. To create a clear, dry, and accessible place for your pruners and shovels, build a handsome wood shed that can rest against the house near the patio or garden.

You can make one in a weekend out of off-the-shelf lumber, or buy a prebuilt kit that screws together in under an hour. Once the quaint cabinet is in place, just remember to rinse off your tools and clean them occasionally with WD-40 before tucking them away. That'll keep rust at bay for years to come.

You'll find all the tools and supplies necessary for this—and any—home project at The Home Depot nearest you.



THE STRIPE



### A chair of a different stripe

A handsome piece of furniture can hold a new, off-to-left style. This is what a specially painted chair does. For design inspiration, simply look around the house. The decorative bands can match your wall or pick up a complementary color. On this chair, a whole of sage green (Benjamin Moore's Spring Valley) echoes the palette of the striped tablecloth. Get the lined look with these easy steps.

A. Draw your design on the chair with a watercolor pencil. It will go on like a stain. Then tape off the lines with painter's tape that resists bleeding.

B. Paint stripes with a large artist's brush or a small foam brush, smoothing your strokes as you go along.

C. Gently pull off the tape before the paint is completely dry.

You've got contrasting hair and added color and personality less than the cost of a comb.

For easy how-to instructions and a list of the tools and materials you'll need, go to [thisoldhouse.com/project](http://thisoldhouse.com/project)

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THE ARLINGTON PROJECT

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## More than a Renovation— a Renaissance

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## Anatomy of a dust bunny

Ever wonder where those real-life-dinner-table-bunnies come from? Believe it or not, environmental scientists have been trying to pick apart this mystery for years. Turns out the average dust bunny can contain anything from insect fecal matter and fungal spores to heavy chemicals and human hair—enough to make right in through the front door. It's enough to make you wonder if it's even the best friend of humans. Read on for all the dusty details, plus tips on how to keep the bunnies at bay. —DEBORAH HANSEN

### SPORES AND GERMS

Allergy and asthma aggravating mold spores/fungi in dusty places that are also warm and humid. It's another how long and big germs survive, but definitely a throw off predators, another threat.

### HEAVY METALS

They're usually really useful in manufacturing, but potentially dangerous when inhaled—so we're taking extreme copper, nickel, and lead. Toxic metals are found in higher concentrations around these, in general, but according to the EPA, Mercury would cause light switches and thermostats may have some.

### keep it clean

The dust particles swirling in a ray of sun fall down to and stay upon the floor where they end up concentrated in carpets and crevices. To avoid dropping in your face and taking them with you, these are the best measures.

### SHED SHOES

About 90 percent of dust particles have inorganic shavings. Lay down a rug or a mat outside to scrape off dirt, use brooms to grab grit and debris, and a hard (scrubbable) floor. Or just take off your shoes at the door.

### VACUUM—A LITTLE

Choose a vacuum cleaner with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter to capture and contain dust that would otherwise be blown back into the room—and your lungs. Don't forget mattress and furniture. Vacuum at least weekly or more often, depending on where you live.

### DUST LAST, NOT FIRST

After vacuuming, dust with a damp microfiber cloth or a dampable fabric duster (duster with a spray-on dust repellent). Try a handheld or stand-up steamer to sanitize floors.

### DANDY, LENT, AND HAM

Ham, lent, and pork for animal dander, carpet and fabric floor, pollen, and even grassy food bits are an itch on the other dust repellents by water, moisture, and proper care—under the bed and elsewhere, of course—by air currents.

### INSECT REMAINS

Moth wings, cockroach legs, and roach pelt. Insect dust is everywhere in the world, and it's a major part of the dust bunny. It's a major part of the dust bunny. It's a major part of the dust bunny.

### ALPHABET SOUP

More than 100 items have been found in household dust: PAHs (for chemical tobacco barbecue grill), PCBs (for electronic products), phthalates (plasticizers), and phthalates (plasticizers) and phthalates (plasticizers) and phthalates (plasticizers).

### NATURAL AND INDUSTRIAL POISONS

They'll never and they'll never. They'll never and they'll never. They'll never and they'll never. They'll never and they'll never. They'll never and they'll never. They'll never and they'll never.



ILLUSTRATION: JEFFREY M. HARRIS

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Real Estate

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# Built-in storage for \$197

A blank wall is transformed with secondhand bookshelves



**BEFORE** The lobby-size bookshelves were a Craigslist find, but their style didn't jibe with the homeowner's vision for the room. **AFTER** Extending the height and width of the units lends a custom look, painting the exposed back wall dark blue makes the white stand out and the shelves look deeper.

## THE PROJECT TALLY

Snagged a pair of solid pine bookcases online — \$100

Made good the pieces by removing the dentil molding, scalloped valance and burlap panel — \$0

Extended the height and width of the units with plywood — \$20

Wrapped the top and base of the units with molding for a built-in look — \$30

Sanded, primed and painted the assembly white — \$30

Added color to the wall behind the shelves with navy blue "egg" paint from the hardware store, and installed new acrylic knobs — \$17

**TOTAL — \$197**

**THEFTY, ASK YOUR**  
Enter your budget redo in our America's Best Remodel Contest for a chance to win cash or a \$1,000 gift card. Go to [RemodelContest.com](http://RemodelContest.com) yourTOD!

**NOT ALL OLDER HOMES** are full of charming details. At Hilary and Dan Delgado's 1950s Cape Cod in Somerset, New Jersey, the no-hum living room lacked architectural character. So Hilary decided to add her own by flanking the window with built-in bookcases. After months of scouring Craigslist for used furniture to incorporate into the design, she found the perfect fit: two solid-pine units with open shelves as well as closed cabinets. Dentil molding, a scalloped valance, and a particleboard back dated the pieces, so she removed them before sanding the units and painting them white. Can used plywood to build three-sided boxes to extend the height of both shelf units, patching in pieces for the face frame and a lattice wall that extends the units' width. Wrapping the top and bottom with crown and base molding made them look built-in. Finally, Hilary painted the wall behind the shelves a nautical blue—befitting a Cape. "I love that we have display space that gives the house character," she says. "Plus the shelves look like they've been here forever." —MEGAN GARDNER



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## From musty to must-see

A beach cottage's rundown cook space becomes a year-round haven

BY TERRANCE BALDWIN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TILLEY

**MANAGE A RENOVATION** long distance? Sounds scary. But not if you are Rick and Chris Schwenn, of White Plains, New York. In one mad eight-week dash, they stepped up an inherited 19th-century beach cottage, found a general contractor through their Realtor, pored over pictures of period fixtures on the Internet, calls located with a contractor on design and layout, and chose the tile, fixtures, and appliances. Because the house is on Martha's Vineyard, off the Massachusetts coast, the couple knew they'd be doing a lot of shipping. Still, they were surprised to learn they could save time and money by transporting the GC and his crew—as well as cabinets and countertops—all the way from Chicago. The well-knit team had worked on other houses on the island and was willing to get the job done quickly. Working off-season with a few local subcontractors, they geared and picked up the rickety space and put in new everything, including appliances and light fixtures snatched during sales. Says Rick: "Our goal was to blend new work seamlessly into our 1870s cottage. We not only succeeded but did it all by cell phone!"



**BEFORE** The space needed more light and less nearby space. **AFTER** The full suite made way for a more open layout, updated plumbing and lighting, a first-time having anti-cooking system, and period details throughout.



**• before • after:  
kitchen**

Cabinets are flush with the standard depth fridge and built in enclosure for a seamless look. Appliances: Q2 Light fixtures: Hudson Valley Lighting

Chris and Rob Schwartz chose cabinets in an afternoon. Finding the right color for them took four months. Paint colors by Benjamin Moore's Stratford Blue



**before**

The 142-square-foot space was disjointed and dysfunctional.



**after**

Now a closet, a pantry, and a powder room came out, allowing the fridge wall and a peninsula with seating to go in.

1 Changed the door swing, an open door no longer blocks the counter

2 Added the powder room to open up the tubline and added a peninsula for prep space and a breakfast bar



3 Detached a chicken coop and a pantry and built a wall to hold the fridge microwave and extra cabinets

4 Cut two pass-throughs to connect the kitchen and living room

5 Placed the range with prep space and added a new ridge and a custom worktable

Source: www.houzz.com

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• before + after:  
kitchen

Cabinet makes 32-year-old kitchen look like brand new with the shakers to match the look of glass-front units. Avoid end-pulls, Jensen



**homeowner tip** — **WISCONSIN** — "We saved almost \$8,000 by negotiating deals on appliances and light fixtures during the winter sales, then put off delivery for six months."



A 1/2-inch-thick slab of walnut (other brick tops) custom-weld ribs with turned legs and a drawer for silver. The floor is a blend of tile and original pine boards. Custom cabinets and worktable: Rinnai Cabinet and Tap Company

The homeowners splurged on marble countertops while opting for standard subway tile. A hanging iron gathers heat (shown with special tile adds a custom touch. Tap, American Olean White, The Copperworks of Metals & Jewelry



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before • after:  
bath

## Fresh start

A layout overhaul and classic fixtures deliver a dreamy master bath

BY ANN ELSTATTON • PHOTOGRAPHS BY WENDY ELLT WERNER

### THE EIGHTIES LOOK

Joey's exactly used the rest of time. And yet, until recently, the master bath in Patty Moennesser's 1986 Naacolea, in Warwick, New York, was still sporting all the old fails. With an ornate beamed ceiling, mirrored walls, sloped ceiling, and patterned wallpaper, "the place was like the son of a bad dream," recalls Jeff DeGane, her architect and longtime friend. Not that the rest of the house was any better. "It was all so ugly," says Patty, who was quick to agree to a whole-house renovation when she and her husband, Joe, got engaged.

Topping the couple's wish list was a more functional master suite. While they pored over lighting catalogs and paint swatches, DeGane devised a layout with better flow, expanding the bathroom and making room for spacious his-and-hers closets just outside it. Then he added timeless details, including wainscoted walls, a uniform 8-foot ceiling trimmed with crown molding, oak flooring, and Patty's favorite feature, a claw-foot soaking tub. "The couple couldn't be happier," says Patty. "It feels like a luxurious hotel suite, a little escape inside our house."



BEFORE

BEFORE the mirror over the old drop-in bathtub offers a clear view of the bath's dingy wallpaper, old-fashioned fixtures, and overall light quarters. AFTER: Crisp white trim and warm blue walls further brighten the spacious new layout. Paint (walls): Farrow & Ball's Owl Room Blue

• before • after:  
bath

The couple had solid-wood floors made for the medicine cabinets. They decided they looked too heavy, installing freewheeling panels was the perfect fit. Kneib and Kneib Restoration Hardware



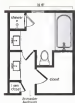
The double vanity topped with Carrera marble offers 8 feet of deck space and cabinet storage. Customary built-in woodwork. Friends Restoration Hardware

## after

Reconfiguring the closets and moving the doorway cleared floor space for a more comfortable layout. New windows flood the room with natural light.

## before

A second vanity outside the main bath and a big L-shaped closet chopped up the space.



- 1) Removed a cramped shower stall, replaced with a cozy tub alcove with built-in shelves at either end.
- 2) Relocated the doorway and traded two windows for one with single storage.
- 3) Tripled the number of windows over the tub.
- 4) Took space from closet to shift the toilet into a very far 4' by 5' stall shower stall.
- 5) Installed double doors at the entrance and slide bedroom space for facing bed and then walk-in closets.



Illustration by: [unclear]

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• before + after:  
bath

The double-sided shower is a fabric clad from a durable blend of resins and acrylic laminate, lightweight alternative to traditional cast iron tub. Includes a 10" x 10" tub for California's water



**homeowner tip** PATTI MONTICONE, WAVERLY, N.Y.  
"Since the bath remodel made the master bedroom smaller, we were careful to enlarge the closets, so the room doesn't need as much furniture."

Covering the shower walls with durable 4-by-12 inch subway tiles creates a clean look and reduces the amount of grout to scrub. (See details)

Built-in open shelves at either end of the tub make use of dead space behind the wall and offer a convenient spot for storing towels and bath accessories.



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VIAGRA is prescription medication to treat erectile dysfunction (ED).

**IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION BELOW.**

Do not take VIAGRA if you take nitrates, often prescribed for chest pain, as this may cause a sudden, unsafe drop in blood pressure.

Discuss your general health status with your doctor to ensure that you are healthy enough to engage in sexual activity. If you experience chest pain, nausea, or any other discomforts during sex, seek immediate medical help.

In the rare event of an erection lasting more than 4 hours, seek immediate medical help to avoid long-term injury. If you are older than age 65, or have serious liver or kidney problems, your doctor may start you at the lowest dose (25 mg) of VIAGRA. If you are taking prostate inhibitors, such as for the treatment of HIV, your doctor may recommend a 25-mg dose and may limit you to a maximum single dose of 25 mg of VIAGRA in a 48-hour period. If you have prostate problems or high blood pressure for which you take medicines called alpha blockers, your doctor may start you on a lower dose of VIAGRA.

In rare instances, men taking PDE5 inhibitors (oral erectile dysfunction medicines, including VIAGRA) reported a sudden decrease or loss of vision or hearing. If you experience sudden decrease or loss of vision or hearing, stop taking PDE5 inhibitors, including VIAGRA, and call a doctor right away.

VIAGRA should not be used with other ED treatments. VIAGRA should not be used with REVATIO or other products containing sildenafil.

VIAGRA does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

The most common side effects of VIAGRA are headache, facial flushing, and upset stomach. Less commonly, bluish vision, blurred vision, or sensitivity to light may briefly occur.

Please see Important Facts for VIAGRA on the following page or visit [viagra.com](http://viagra.com) for full prescribing information.

\*Data taken from the Massachusetts Male Aging Study. Of 1,290 respondents, 52% stated that they had some degree of ED.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit [www.FDA.gov/medwatch](http://www.FDA.gov/medwatch) or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

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(sildenafil citrate) Pfizer

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## IMPORTANT FACTS



### IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION ABOUT VIAGRA

Never take VIAGRA if you are on nitric oxide with nitrites. This includes nitroglycerin. Your blood pressure could drop quickly. It could lead to an attack or a life-threatening event.

### ABOUT ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION (ED)

ED is a medical condition that causes you to have trouble getting or keeping an erection. ED can be caused by many factors, including age, stress, and certain medications. Your doctor may not be able to help.

### ABOUT VIAGRA

VIAGRA is a prescription drug. When you want to have sex, VIAGRA can help you get and keep an erection when you are sexually aroused. You cannot get an erection just by taking the pill. Only your doctor can prescribe VIAGRA.

VIAGRA does not cure ED.

VIAGRA does not protect you or your partner from STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) or HIV. You will need to use a condom.

VIAGRA is not a hormone or an aphrodisiac.

### WHO IS VIAGRA FOR?

Who should take VIAGRA?

Men who have ED and whose heart is healthy enough for sex.

Who should NOT take VIAGRA?

- If you ever take medicines with nitrites.
- Medicines that treat chest pain (nitroglycerin or isosorbide mononitrate or dinitrate).
- If you are on some blood thinners, such as "poppers" (inhalant nitrites or nitrate).
- If you are allergic to anything in the VIAGRA tablet.

### BEFORE YOU START VIAGRA

Tell your doctor if you have or have had:

- Heart attack, abnormal heart rate, or stroke.
- Heart problems, such as heart failure, chest pain, angina, or aortic valve narrowing.
- Low or high blood pressure.
- Recent vision loss.
- An eye medicine called retinoid pigmentation.
- Kidney or liver problems.
- Blood problems, such as sickle cell anemia or leukemia.
- A deformed penis. Penile curvature or an erection that lasted more than 4 hours.
- Sexual abuse or any kind of bleeding problem.

Tell your doctor about all your medicines, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal products. Tell your doctor if you take or use:

- Medicines called alpha blockers to treat high blood pressure or prostate problems. Your blood pressure could suddenly get too low. You could go dizzy or faint. Your doctor may start you on a lower dose of VIAGRA.
- Medicines called proton pump inhibitors for HEN. Your doctor may prescribe a 20 mg dose. Your doctor may lower VIAGRA to 20 mg if it is not your first year.
- Other medicines to cause erections. These include ginseng, yohimbin, or yohimbin.
- A medicine called REVATIO. VIAGRA should not be used with REVATIO or REVATIO combination tablets. The combination could cause a life-threatening event.

### POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF VIAGRA

Side effects may occur. Some of these side effects may be serious. Tell your doctor if you have any of these side effects.

The most common side effects are:

- Headache
- Flushing
- Upset stomach

Less common side effects are:

- Trouble getting and keeping an erection or seeing a blue tinge to things.
- Eyes being more sensitive to light.
- Stomach upset.

There is a small number of men taking VIAGRA who reported these serious events:

- Having an erection that lasts more than 4 hours. If the erection is not treated right away, it can lead to permanent damage.
- Sudden decrease or loss of sight in one or both eyes. We do not know if these events are caused by VIAGRA and endometriosis like a or caused by other factors. They may be caused by conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes. If you have sudden vision changes, stop taking VIAGRA and all medicines like it. Call your doctor right away.
- Sudden decrease or loss of hearing. We do not know if these events are caused by VIAGRA and endometriosis like a or caused by other factors. If you have sudden hearing changes, stop taking VIAGRA and all medicines like it. Call your doctor right away.
- Heart attack, stroke, irregular heartbeat, and death. We do not know whether these events are caused by VIAGRA or caused by other factors. Most of these happenings were in men who already had heart problems.

If you have any of these problems, stop VIAGRA. Call your doctor right away.

### HOW TO TAKE VIAGRA

Do

- Take VIAGRA only the way your doctor tells you. VIAGRA comes in 25 mg, 50 mg, and 100 mg tablets. Your doctor will tell you how much to take.
- If you are over 65 or have serious liver or kidney problems, your doctor may start you on the lowest dose (25 mg).
- Take VIAGRA about 1 hour before you want to have sex. VIAGRA starts to work in about 30 minutes when you are sexually excited. VIAGRA lasts up to 4 hours.

Don't

- Do not take VIAGRA more than once a day.
- Do not take more VIAGRA than your doctor tells you.
- If you think you need more VIAGRA, talk with your doctor.
- Do not start or stop any other medicines before checking with your doctor.

### NEED MORE INFORMATION?

- This is only a summary of important information. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for complete product information.
- Go to [www.viagra.com](http://www.viagra.com) or call (800) 4-VIAGRA (800-424-4274).



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## Checkered charm

Add warmth and whimsy to a plain white space with the help of painter's tape and a half-dozen pale shades. BY DEBORAH DALLWATER • PHOTOGRAPH BY JEN OUTKAMEN

**CONFRONTATION** a cottage kitchen where nothing lined up, San Francisco-based decorator painter Paul d'Orville decided to play off its haphazard lines with a checkerboard in six muted shades. After putting down a base coat of robin's-egg blue, he mapped out a pattern of 16-inch squares, allowing them to bump up against cabinets, windows, and countertops. "The eye is very forgiving," he says. "As long as the horizontals are the same throughout, you have leeway to widen or narrow a square—where it meets a corner, say—by a half inch or so." Or more like 10 millimeters. "I always use metric tape," he says. "Making fractions out of inches will drive you crazy."

Armed with a pencil and a 4-foot level and using the cross-mappings as a starting point, d'Orville marked out and taped off the squares, then filled two-thirds of them in a random patchwork of related colors. He worked in sections, using a rock trowel and taking care to work on the right side of the tape. "Measuring took about four hours and painting maybe six," says the pro, who likes to spread out the work over a few days. "Just be sure to choose colors of the same intensity." The result: one-part harmony. ■



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↑ For inspiration, look below: white and countertops to mirror up the pattern's lines.

## Problem-solvers and cool finds

Inventive new products offer easy ways to upgrade the kitchen and bath. Here are 23 that caught our eye

BY DEBORAH CALDWYN



### farmhouse moderns

Five-style 28-gauge stainless steel gives this forward-sloping front sink a sleek look. It's a great complementing 9 inches deep and comes with a single or double basin. From \$134.95. [www.covekitchen.com](http://www.covekitchen.com)

### faux cast iron

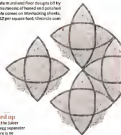
Solid, though not acrylic, matte or polished, gives this shapely 7½-inch Enclave tub more bath than before some acrylic tubs, without risk of permanent scratches. From \$150. [www.covekitchen.com](http://www.covekitchen.com)

**NOTE:** We list only manufacturer's suggested retail prices. As new products become more available, prices will come down. You'll find more for the best deal.



### preassembled petals

The Romans had to piece together their elaborate mosaic floor designs bit by bit. This mosaic of hand-cut polished marble comes on interlocking sheets. \$42 per square foot. [www.cheerco.com](http://www.cheerco.com)



### bottled up

Finding the juicer grater, egg separator and more is no problem when they're right between the faucet and the recessed tap cup. And it's fun to keep the eye catching. \$10. [www.kitchen-twist.com](http://www.kitchen-twist.com)



### matte finish

Give open shelves something to showcase and yourself a handwashing reminder: a stainless steel pot. The classic Quik cook two contains three water colors: this Mineral Blue. Carbon and Steel. From \$112. [www.bonanza.com](http://www.bonanza.com)



### warm up the cook space

Rich purple hue is an eye-popping this year and one more on cabinets, with shades like Cranberry-Ginger (GR) and Almond-Lavender. From \$150. [www.cabinet.com](http://www.cabinet.com)



### get a jump on dinner

Preheat the Profile wall oven via cell phone and get a text when the roast is done. Its reservation fan sits above the racks. [www.1000.com](http://www.1000.com) even cooking. From \$2,999. [www.1000.com](http://www.1000.com)



### affordable accent

Peeking out from under the matte-black shade of the Glimmer pendant is a fashionable long-rod reflector in brass. Matching brass clip completes the elegant industrial look. From \$200. [www.1000.com](http://www.1000.com)



### wake up the backsplash

Handmade ceramic tile gets a fresh twist. The Dharma collection offers 21 graphic patterns in blue, white and gray. \$15.50 per square foot. [www.dharma.com](http://www.dharma.com)



EASY FIX

### no more mold

"Eli" is a new shower without breaking a sweat or shedding with grout. A set of 100 1/2-inch 100% mold-resistant polyurethane includes three 36-by-12-inch glue-in place panels. From \$1,199. [www.1000.com](http://www.1000.com)





#### declutter

Store those glasses and their silverware in this drawer organizer with this sleek, compact design which has LEE parts and is wired through the back of an existing drawer and cabinet. \$49.99. [dockingdrawer.com](http://dockingdrawer.com)

EASY  
FIX



#### snappy ceramics

The upstage literature collection includes 24 patterns designed to jazz up a backsplash. \$62.50 per square foot. [magnumtile.com](http://magnumtile.com)



#### period update

The sleek Visions Lite faucet has a graceful arc and comfy cross handles. And it comes with a too, with a 2 1/2-gallon-per minute flow. From \$400. [brasscraft.com](http://brasscraft.com)

EASY  
FIX



#### get organized

Fast and raised handle lets you get to grips with a night with this slide-out. The rack, which can handle 100 pounds, comes with heavy-duty holes and an easy-install mounting bracket you provide. The empty cabinet. \$209. [glennware.com](http://glennware.com)

#### highly flexible

With two seconds into below-one with four settings so that it can chill or freeze. Freezers have up top, plus an ice and water dispenser. See more. Chief Collection 4 Door Refrigerator also on a corner note at \$6,399. [samson.com](http://samson.com) for details



#### stands up nicely

Polished chrome has an angular design that the 15 1/2-inch console sits a forward spin, and its glass shelf keeps towels handy. \$1,120. [decidefor.com](http://decidefor.com)

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## Perfect fit for a family

The 1870s Italianate had lots of character but no breathing room for a couple with young kids—until the TOH TV project team arrived

BY JILL COONWOLD • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TRULLI

SIX YEARS AGO, Heather and Malcolm Foulds were condo dwellers in Cambridge when they fell for a 2,100-square-foot Italianate in the Boston suburb of Arlington, now the subject of the current *The Old House* TV season. “We loved the character of the house,” says Malcolm, including its decorative roof brackets, double-height entry foyes, quarter-sawn oak floors, and original interior trim. “But we had a pretty long list of what needed to change, right from the start,” says Heather. In sum: Open up the first floor, create a new kitchen where the family could gather, and retain the period details.

Enter architect David Whitney, who created a big open kitchen, sent the home office upstairs, and fit in a mudroom, a powder room, and a coat closet near the front entry, within the existing footprint. The plan called for adding just 200 square feet—to create a second-floor master suite over the kitchen.

For TOH general contractor Tom Silva, the biggest challenges were below grade, where the leaky, crumbling rubble-masonry foundation had to be fixed. Only then could the delightful discoveries begin, such as the original plaster crown molding uncovered in the living and dining rooms. “Those original elements really make the house feel like it still has its old character,” says Tom.

With the place brought up to its full potential, living in a dream home is now an everyday reality for Heather and Malcolm and their two children, ages 7 and 5. And that no-doubt was their main reason they bought the house? Done.



**OPEN/CONCEPT** The window that cut its luncheon carved out of a home office at the back of the house is a stamped central blotcher, and adjoining wall with a full-width chimney. Prefinished chestnut floors and a book island top warm up the white subway tile. Four radiant heat coils rest beneath the island. With its microwave, sink, dishwasher, and seating, the island is meal prep and snack time central.



**SPILL-PROOF** A bar for a pantry, just off the kitchen, occupies space that had been an awkward full bath. The island's shelves in the breakfast nook perform emergency

**THIRD FLOOR**  
OWNER'S SUITE: David Whitney  
REAR PORCH: David Whitney  
KITCHEN: Tom Silva  
BATH: Tom Silva  
HALL: Tom Silva  
LIVING: Tom Silva  
DINING: Tom Silva  
PANTRY: Tom Silva  
PORCH: Tom Silva  
GARAGE: Tom Silva  
STUDIO: Tom Silva  
BUNKER: Tom Silva



**PORCH-PODS** With its drop ceiling removed, the dining room sports newly exposed red-painted plaster crown molding and a window ledge. The room is a hunk of plaster. Tom Silva is enclosing the porch with matching quarter-sawn oak planks. He has made the passageway between the dining room and kitchen wider and brighter, enhancing the open layout.



**WORK ZONE** The cooking area is defined by black enameled countertops. A packing shelf with a built-in copper vent hood sets a long, low wall. A shiplap center with quarter-sawn oak planks occupies the perpendicular wall. Flat and glass panel cabinets cling to the ceiling for simple storage. Subway tile and an apron front sink complete the vintage feel.

ORIGINAL CHARTER  
MAY 18 1862

a. *Heterogynis*, and c.

The livingroom, just off the entry foyer, retains its original character, too, with some original details including newly exposed and refinished crown molding. Tucked into the original fireplace alcove is a fireplace for the home molding throughout the house. The entire home got an energy-efficient makeover, with insulation added in the walls and attic and new ductwork for a high efficiency gas boiler installed in the basement.



**CLEAN AND DRYING.** The master bath was created by expending the second floor with additional square footage over the kitchen. Steam shower fittings and a floor radiant heat add up to the ultimate luxury. Linerless tiles cover the walls and floor with a pebble stone surface in the shower. The double vanity is topped with white solid surfacing.

**SUITE RETREAT** The master bedroom was configured from an existing bedroom but enlarged to allow for a large closet and a dedicated bath defined by pocket doors. Neutral colors with a fl-white walls and white trim keep the suite light and bright. The quarters are oak floors are original.



## NEW TIGER

I framed out wall niche provides easy access to AV equipment needed to run the large projection TV in the family's new basement media room. The screen hangs opposite the sofa.



floor plans

**floor plans** While the floor plan did not change, the first floor was opened up to accommodate the chemist's jewelry, powder room, individual restrooms. On the second floor, the master suite has two bedrooms across an office. Only 200 square feet was added upstairs to build a master bath and closet and to make a larger kids' bath.



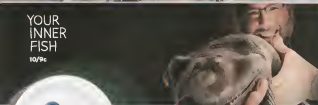
**RENEWED FEELING**  
The building's exterior...

polished Benetton Moore's sculptural Tuftile is authentic to the period of the house. Tom added a new architectural element: a porch railing where one was lacking. He also replicated the original carter's under the eaves of the upstairs rear addition. The new level was sheathed in white-painted pine beadboard to suggest a room that had been converted from a sunroom or porch.



**Call to action:** To give the family's new basement room





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build it  
or buy it

## Folding serving tray

Build a custom tray in red oak or buy one ready-made and leave

more time for making breakfast BY PAUL HOPE • PHOTOGRAPH BY WENDELL WEBER

**HINT: THERE'S NO** need to wait for a special occasion to serve a certain someone breakfast in bed. First, you'll need a good tray—one with legs that will keep it steady on a sea of bedding and then fold up so that the tray can be slipped inside a cabinet or drawer.

If you want to go all out on the presentation, you can build a tray, like the slatted one here. The frame is formed from inexpensive oak slats—1½-by-2-inch pieces stacked near the hardwood moldings in home centers. Look for the 1½-inch oak slats in the same area. Staining gives the oak a refined look, though you'll want to treat the surface with a food-safe finish, such as mineral oil or shellac, to protect it from spills. Once you've chosen your new tray, you may want to back it out every Sunday morning as a matter of routine. We're just saying.



MAKE IT  
YOURSELF

Find a tutorial to  
inspire and the  
tools and

materials you'll need to build  
this tray at [thecoolhouse.com/mag234](http://thecoolhouse.com/mag234)



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# BUILD IT

Use three oak materials to build a custom serving tray for less than you'd spend on a fancy breakfast

COST \$25 for oak lumber

TIME 3 hours

DIFFICULTY Easy Cutting grooves requires a steady hand, but assembly is simple

1) **Cut the frame pieces.** Use a miter saw to trim the pieces according to the cut list in the bookhouse.com/may2014. To form the sides, glue the short piece to the inner face of the long one, leaving a 1/4-inch rabbet at each end.

2) **Fit the grooves.** Lay the frame pieces face-down, then, using the double-flute side pieces together and the three front and back pieces together. Wedge the pairs tightly between lumber scraps of the same thickness, and screw the screws to the table to hold the frame pieces in place. Use a straightedge and a router with a 1/4-inch straight bit to cut an square groove, or dado, along the inside of each frame piece, 1/4 inch from the top.

3) **Install the slats.** Use 60-grit paper and a sanding block to ease the long edges of each slat. Install the slats, fit the end pieces to the assembly, then glue and tack the corners with a hand saw and 1/4-inch brads. Glue a supporting slat along the midline, underneath.

4) **Install the legs.** Round the tops of the legs with 60-grit sandpaper. Drill a 1/4-inch hole 1 inch from the bottom of each leg. Use dowels and glue to join the legs. With a 1/4-inch spade bit, bore holes 1/4 inch deep into the frame's outer face, 1/4 inch in from the corners. Drill through the center of each hole with a 1/4-inch bit, make matching holes 1/4 inch from the top of each leg. Attach the legs with nylon washers and machine screws. Cap the holes with oak plugs.

5) **Stain and finish.** Sand the tray lightly with 220-grit paper. Stain it clear, then apply stain. Once dry, seal the wood with a food-safe finish.



# BUY IT

Expect to pay a premium for solid hardwood construction

**\$39** the handier man  
This slatted tray can hold books, the bank and holds the just finished thicker for easy storage. Smartest one.



**\$51** the next range needs it  
Made by hand from sustainable birch. The outdoor is easy to clean. The indoor is easy to clean.



**\$64** the brown man  
Carved from solid birch. The piece has a finished end for easy to clean. The end is applied by hand. Smartest one.



PHOTO: KIMMY DAVIS FOR THE BOOKHOUSE.COM; DESIGN: KIMMY DAVIS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 58

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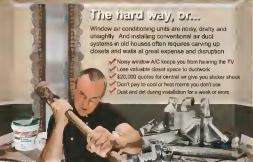
# Heating and Cooling Your Old House

weekend remodel

## The hard way, or...

Window air conditioning units are noisy, dirty and unsightly. And installing conventional air duct systems in old houses often requires carving up closets and walls at great expense and disruption.

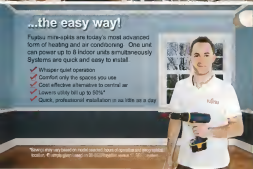
- ✓ Noisy window A/C keeps you from hearing the TV
- ✓ Lose valuable closet space to ductwork
- ✓ \$20,000 quotes for central air give you sticker shock
- ✓ Don't pay to cool or heat rooms you don't use
- ✓ Dust and dirt during installation for a week or more



## ...the easy way!

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- ✓ Lowers utility bill up to 50%\*
- ✓ Quick, professional installation in as little as a day



\*Savings vary widely based on model, season, hours of operation and geographic location. Energy guide used in 2010/2011 season. © 2011 Fujitsu

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## Build a compost bench

Use clear cedar boards to assemble a comfortable and productive focal point for your yard. BY JOHN CARY • PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOELNORMAN

COST \$350

TIME 3 hours over two days  
DURABILITY Easy. Uses lots of pieces, but cut-and-assembly is simple



**WE LOVE A GOOD GARDEN BENCH.** A better garden bench is one that doubles as a compost bin. Inspired by benches at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, in Brooklyn, New York, this one is open-bottomed so that the compost has ground contact. It's made of rot-resistant cedar boards spaced wide to promote good air circulation. The seat opens for easy turning of the compost, and the back and arms make it a perfect perch for a break from gardening. Follow along as *This Old House* contributor Christopher Beidel, owner of Fern, a handmade furniture company in Brooklyn, shows you how to make this piece—in practical as it is pretty.

Turned compost regularly and leaving it free of most garden scraps are critical to producing better.

DAY-TO-DAY  
TIMELINE

**SATURDAY** Build the base and seat (Steps 1-4).  
**SUNDAY** Make and install the backrest and arms (Steps 5-7).



TOOLS

miter saw  
circular saw  
bar clamp  
drill/driver  
circular saw counter sink bit  
1/4-inch drill bit

MATERIALS

**1x4 clear cedar** Get eleven 8' boards for the seat and supports.  
**2x4 clear cedar** Get five 8' boards for the corner posts.  
**1x4 clear cedar** Get eleven 8' boards for the slats.  
**1x4 clear cedar** Get one 8' board for the seat lip.  
**2x4** and **2x6** 1/4-inch-deep screws  
**48**-inch-long corner braces

Finish a cut list and dimension drawings at [diydw.com](http://diydw.com) or [mydiy.com](http://mydiy.com).



1 CUT THE PARTS

**A** Make the right-angle cuts. On your miter saw, make the straight cuts for all the joints according to the cut list.  
**B** Make the angled cuts. The four brackets for the angled braces are used so that when you cut them diagonally you get two pieces from each blank. Clamp one corner of a blank to your work surface, and draw a diagonal line corner to corner. Set the circular saw blade to a depth of 2 1/2 inches. Make the crosscut, as shown, to create two angled pieces. Repeat the process on the other three blanks.

ILLUSTRATION: JEFFREY M. HARRIS



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## 2 BUILD THE BASE PANELS

**A) Make the corner posts.** Clamp two 2x4 pieces for a front corner post together at edge to face in an L shape, as shown. Use a countersink bit in your drill to drive four screws through the face and into the edge. Secure the pieces with 2½-inch deck screws. Make the other front corner post. For the rear corner posts, butt the edge of a short 2x4 into the face of the long post for the butt joint.

**B) Assemble the front panel.** Lay the front corner posts on your work surface with the edge-to-face seams facing out, and place three base slats between them. Use a hunk of 2x4 to set the top slat 1½ inches down from the post tops, leaving room for the cap piece in Step 4B. Then use ¼-inch spacers to set the distance between the slats. Countersink two pilot holes through the slats and into the posts, at least 1½ inch from the ends of the slats. Secure the slats with 2½-inch deck screws.

**C) Attach the bottom.** Set a batten across the center of the slats. Countersink three pilot holes in a triangular pattern through the batten into each slat. Secure the batten to the slat with 2½-inch deck screws. Build the back panel the same way, including the ¼-inch space for the cap.



## 3 ASSEMBLE THE BASE

**A) Attach the side slats.** Start with the back panel on the table. Clamp inside slat against a post, aligning it with the slatting slat, as shown. (Remember to maintain the ¼-inch setback from the post top.) Countersink three pilot holes through the short slat into the post, and secure it with three 2½-inch deck screws in a triangular pattern. Repeat the process on the other five side slats, using spacers between boards.

**B) Add the front piece.** Set the front panel on top of the side slats. Again, countersink pilot holes through the slats into the posts, and secure the pieces with 2½-inch deck screws.

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**TIP** Cedar is not resistant, but you can keep your bench looking its best longer by finishing it with transparent weather-proofing sealer.

#### 4 BUILD THE SEAT

**A) Assemble the seat slats.** Lay the seat slats with 1/4-inch spacers between them, and clamp them together. Arrange the three battens, one at the center of the seat, the other two 12 inches to either side, and slide the seat back 1/4 inch from the seat's front edge. Counter-sink pilot holes through the battens and into the slats and drive 1/4-inch deck screws into place.

**B) Attach the cross brace.** Clamp the 2x4 cross brace between the faces of the center battens. Counter-sink pilot holes through the face of the top rail into the end grain of the cross brace at both ends. Then secure the brace with 2 1/2-inch deck screws. Drill the brace apart, and glue on the three end pieces along the back edge and the two sides. Counter-sink these and secure them with 1 1/4-inch deck screws.



#### 5 BUILD THE BACKREST

**A) Attach the backrest brackets.** Clamp the 1x6 batten for the backrest to your work surface. Set the two backrest brackets in place along the batten, as shown. Counter-sink two pilot holes through the underside face of the batten and into the end grain of each of the brackets. Then secure them with two 2 1/2-inch deck screws apiece.

**B) Attach the cross supports.** Place the two horizontal cross supports on the cut edges of the backrest brackets, top and bottom. Counter-sink pilot holes through the supports into the brackets, as shown. Secure with 2 1/4-inch deck screws.

**C) Install the slats.** Set the slats for the backrest on the horizontal supports. Use spacers to set the slats 1/4 inch apart and 1/4 inch from the ends. Counter-sink pilot holes from the back of the assembly into the slats, and secure them with 1 1/4-inch deck screws.



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## 6 ATTACH THE BACKREST ASSEMBLY AND ARMS

**1 Attach the backrest.** Align the backrest assembly on top of the seat cap and post top, as shown. Countersink pilot holes through the back of the 2x4 post into the back of the angled brackets. Secure the assembly with 2½-inch deck screws. Then use ¼-inch deck screws to secure the footer to the cap front/bend.

**2 Make the armrests.** Clamp an armrest board on edge to your work surface. Countersink pilot holes through the armrest and into the brackets, and secure the pieces with two screws per bracket—one 2½ inches, the other 1½ inches. Repeat the process for the other armrest.

**3 Attach the armrests.** Clamp the top of the armrest assembly about 6 inches above the seat. Use the combi countersink bit to drill two pilot holes, bottoming it out at the top location. Secure the bracket to the corner post with a 2½-inch screw at the top location and a 1½-inch deck screw at the bottom location. Flip up the process on the other bracket. Install the other armrest.



## 7 ATTACH THE SEAT

**1 Secure the hinges.** Fit the bench seat of the cap on a 2x4 spacer that runs its full length. Set the open hinge against the seat's back edge, with the barrel facing forward, and mark the holes with a pencil. Remove the hinge and use a ¼-inch bit to make pilot holes along the edge. Then use a screwdriver to secure the hinge to the seat with the included screws. Now set the seat on a raised position with the hinge flat against the edge of the bench/footer. Make pilot holes and attach the hinge leaf.

**2 Install the seat lip.** Open the seat and center the 2x4 lip into the gap in front of the seat bottom. Countersink eight pilot holes through the edge of the cleat into the seat slat. Secure the cleat with 1½-inch deck screws. Set the bench in place, and show us some pics and we'll get the competing started! ■



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# HIDDEN BEAUTY

An unlivable wreck regains  
its sunny glory in the  
hands of zealous owners with  
a vision of its past



by Deborah Baldwin • photographs by Deborah Whitlaw Jewell  
produced by Colette Scanlon • styling by Brian Carter



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“**I**T WAS PITCH BLACK IN THERE,”

Anna Spencer says, recalling the first time she tried to poke her head into her family's new home. Operative word: *tried*. “The vegetation was way too close.” And over the *debrushed* thorough, she saw that “the draperies and shades had dry-rotted off their rods and rollers,” she says. “There were layers of pet hair.” It was hard to see the flooring for the flea, one of the abhorred owners had given a *crowded* feel over the run of the place, suggesting that he was not quite sold on the idea of making a sale.

“That house is not a good idea,” the Realtor said, speaking from a safe distance.

Luckily, Anna and her equally game husband, Michael, had eyes only for what hadn't been raised: 9-foot-4-inch ceilings trimmed with crown molding, arched French doors with dusty locksets and glass



ABOVE: Homeowners Anna and Michael Spencer pose with daughter Anna Grace. 4: did much of the work themselves. 500 (L): Stone-center cabinets and salvaged subway tile take a bathroom to a floor of board-and-batten the outdoors to its create a stunning three-tone palette with easy-to-install grout lines.

panels, and generous rooms in a compact, free-flowing plan. The three-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath house had been in teenage hands springing up in central Florida about 90 years ago, but it had remained so many were down, you could almost feel the cross-ventilation—ensuring you could get them open. “The house had good bones and was begging to be rescued,” says Anna, in the antebellum-appealing manner of old-house champions. “It was on nearly three city lots in a desirable ZIP code, so most people saw a money tree.”

Michael had been searching for a place near his new job when he spotted this one, sitting back from the road at Orange Meadows, a 1920s subdivision remodeling the border of Delonte and Winter Park. A rhythmic array of windows punctuated the facade, some small, some arched, some doubling as French doors, many still framed by thin lines of black paint. While the exterior



During exterior repainting, a thick white finish, seen at right, was left exposed. The shower area has a 1920s vintage stone tile.

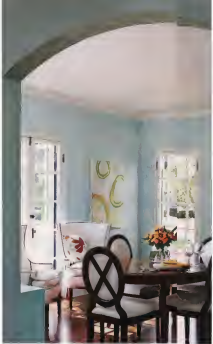
was done, the front entrance had held on to its arched archway and original screen and entry door, screen, and quarry-tile stoop. Red clay roof tiles, iron balconies, an arched porte cochere on one side and a sun-flooded "Florida room" on the other. The stucco-on-concrete-block exterior was a triumph of Mediterranean Revival style with hints of Italian Renaissance—and, truly, they don't make them like that anymore.

While the house had escaped various remodeling enterprises, the wiring was scary, the bath lacked hot water, and the front door no longer had a knob. Fishy odors covered the heart pine flooring upstairs, and the oak floorboards downstairs couldn't be saved. Most fixtures, car parts and lawn equipment—former owners had been in the yard-care business—filled the garage and stored in the underbrush.

"Our Realtor thought we could do much better. She practically cried during closing," Anton recalls.

By then the couple had had good-bye to their former home, packed up their young daughter and moved into a short-term rental. That meant they had keys to a new house but only five months to turn it into a home.

The two plunged in, filling three 30-year dumpsters with abandoned furniture, shattered plates, and mud-bagging mounds of debris. As the old bones



**LEFT:** The new boiler supplies hot water to the kitchen, but to match those surrounding the range and an arched opening, hoodcaps before painting on. **ABOVE:** These sets of perforated French-vision floor the high-ceilinged dining room, and its new oak flooring with light.

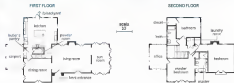


**BELOW:** Like the rest of the house, the living room was designed to maximize cross ventilation, with doors opening to the back as well as the front.



## FLOOR PLANS

This redo increased the square footage slightly. At 2,812 square feet, stretched the kitchen area to become a kid-friendly island, and kept on the inside and extended the master suite. Upstairs, one half was enlarged and became part of the master suite, and a sleeping porch became a yoga room or office.





LEFT The sunroom, like the Florida room, has its original cork, open windows and a painted exterior floor.

emerged, the couple listed what they saw. The only area that needed major work was around the kitchen. The two bathrooms would have to be gutted, but not a big deal, says Anne, a cheerful woman with a litany voice: "Michael is a project manager at SonWorld—moving a toilet, to him, does not involve a lot of emotion."

The couple shared the job of general contractor. Anne balanced savings and upturns while sifting for salvageable materials, separating the business and clutter-light fixtures with shades fanned on eBay and installing them in the kitchen. When workers threw chimney bricks into the dumpster, she climbed inside to retrieve them. "As long as I was in there, I thought I'd hang off the mortar," she says. "That's how I broke my thumb." The bricks now line a wobbly Subway tile and floor between walls became the kitchen backdrop's "beats around a bowl butt," she says.

Rather than replace the windows and doors, the couple shopped them off as a workshop nearby, where they were steam stripped, replaced, and painted. "It's lots of French doors, 12 double doors, and 30 casements," says Anne. "And not all at once, because that would make it hard to secure the house and still see what we were doing." Michael put them back in, using a fishing-line trick he picked up on YouTube to avoid braying work cords as he fed them down the channels.

It was hard to find subcontractors sympathetic to their way of doing things. Anne grilled four rockers



LEFT The master bedroom keeps its original Juliet balcony. BELOW: The master bath has a new layout and period-inspired fixtures, including a vintage medicine cabinet and a freestanding rock bathtub.

before one agreed to work with the tacky half-bushel sides. She eventually came to blows with a tile setter who could not wrap his mind around the rectified edges and patterns found in century-old subway stations. Then there was having to persuade the plumber and carpenter to lay pipes in open channels that could be hidden by three-piece crown molding in the kitchen.

Most complicated was laying a tessera kitchen floor in a pattern that evokes old-world artistry. This meant buying batches of marble tile that had too much sheen and perusing a tile center to cure 12-inch squares into smaller rhomboids and squares, then rectifying any steel edges and reassembling the pieces on sections.

To speed things along, Anne volunteered to sit in excess wiring from the back of each assembly, a project temporarily suspended after a subfloor caved under the weight of a tile-lifter pulley, trapping one of her feet. Michael came running with a power saw just as a control router overloaded the feeble wiring and the lights went out.

As a seasoned homeowner and self-right designer, Anne paid attention to details, sprucing for an understated elegance with steel trim more than one of painted wood, for example, because "wood is hard to keep clean over a coating, and aluminum would have been too industrial." She customized home-center cabinets with no rise lines "to reflect the oh-so-slimsies, it helps make the space seem bigger and keeps it from being too white."

They hired help to install flooring and cooking, wire in a sleeping porch, smoke and replace walls, sandblast the stucco, and tear out those sagged tiles. Remarkably, the whole project got done in just five months and landed an award from the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation.

Today the house is an updated version of its original, proud self. When the family gathers in the kitchen or the Florida room-Mediterranean sunroom, it's hard to believe this is the same place that almost made their lives

harder. "I fell in love with it when I saw the original house," says Anne. And all that work was worth it. "We'll correct more again—even if we wound up, nothing else would act as well." ■



Find Remodeling services for these used-style houses by the page or guide [mayfile.com/30000houses](http://mayfile.com/30000houses)



# DIY LESSONS FROM MOM

FORGET ALL THAT "FATHER KNOWS BEST" STUFF. SOME OF OUR MOST RESOURCEFUL READERS' FAVORITE DO-IT-YOURSELF ADVICE—TO SAY NOTHING OF HOME-IMPROVEMENT INSPIRATION—CAME FROM THEIR MOTHERS

Illustrations by Christopher Silas Neal



**WHAT I LEARNED**  
Quit horsing around, and you can accomplish great things!

Don Dattman 75, Nokesville, Virginia

"We had three boys in the family, and my mother would always say, 'One boy is half a man, two boys are no man at all.' That's because one boy could do half a man's work, but two of us would just aggravate each other and not get anything done. We did finish some projects, though. Once, Mom helped install new flooring at our church and brought all the old boards home! It was beautiful tongue-and-groove hard-eye maple. She had us clean out each joint before nailing down the boards and refinishing them. Another time she and I found cabinets that were being discarded, and we rebuilt our entire kitchen. Back then, if we didn't do it ourselves, it didn't get done."





After leaving out the old ceiling, Sherie Davis's mom, GenGee, helps finish drywall.

#### WHAT I LEARNED Being the helper pays off.

Shirley Davis, 40, Madison, Michigan

"My family moved 18 times, all in the same town, by the time I was 20 years old. The moves were all because Mom ran out of home-improvement and became bored. She learned everything she knew from her dad. Since I was the youngest, I was always her assistant—the official helper at the other end of the board and the tape measure, under the hammer of trim moldings, painter of inconspicuous spots. I never realized how much I'd learned until my husband and I sold our own house. Just from watching her, I know the right way to do things."

#### WHAT I LEARNED Label what you take apart.

Majorie Bell, 50, Denver, Colorado

"My dad worked long hours, so my mom took on many of the first jobs around the house. Her favorite expression was 'Figure it out,' which took on new meaning when she decided to replace our staircases. After sawing three floors' worth of spindles to give them a fresh coat of stain and polyurethane, we ran headfirst into the gutter back on a specific order. Whoo! It took six years to get them all back in their proper spots."

#### WHAT I LEARNED You can do cool projects with castoffs.

Maria Williams, 40, Midtown Park, Michigan

"My mother didn't fix things, but she was an expert at repurposing finds for interior design projects. This was in the 1960s, well before the word 'upcycling' was coined. She had the idea repurpose our family room with old barn boards, so my grandpa, dad, and I salvaged doors of them from an abandoned barn. Mom and I washed them, sanded the best ones, cut them into a wicker size, and finished them to use as wall art. She did hundreds of such projects, and her home was by far the most interesting in our suburban Detroit neighborhood."

#### ...And our picks of your moms' best tips

"To remove them [nails or brads], run an old iron over the tiles. The heat melts the adhesive so you can use a scraper to lift up the flooring."  
—Mary Joske

"When painting, molding, snap it up on scrap cans turned sideways. That way you can roll the molding toward you rather than having to step down the line with each brushstroke."  
—Susan Heyborne

"Drip clumps of wine soaked cat litter down coat hangers to clear your greasy areas of lawn care."  
—Dave Estess

"Make a list every time you start any project. Write down everything including the tiny details, and check off each item as you go. Then you always see that you are making progress and won't lose motivation."  
—Candy Glucose Spencer



#### WHAT I LEARNED Never leave a project unfinished; you can sleep later.

Deborah, 57, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

"My mom was a single parent who worked full-time, so it wasn't uncommon for her to work on home-improvement projects in the evenings. I recall one time being woken up well after midnight by the bang boom, bang bang, which she was using to frame out a second floor for the bedroom she was building in the basement. I went down and yelled, 'Mom, what are you doing?' Her response: 'I gotta get it done.' She must have been up until 4 a.m. To this day, I can't stand to see a project half done. It makes me mad."

#### WHAT I LEARNED Be confident—and do your homework.

Scott, 40, 1001 N. 10th St., Fort Lauderdale, Florida

"When I was a teenager, my mom showed me how to spruce up the kitchen and entered me to help. Usually, the job was to just repair the cabinets, but the next thing I knew, Mom was getting the place. She learned to do everything through trial and error and by watching videos borrowed from the local library. Flash-forward 20 years to when my wife and I bought a house—

upper. I started only thought of Mom's kitchen project and said to myself, 'I can do that.' Along the way, I learned the word, 'What the hell am I doing?' But the belief in myself that my mom instilled in me always pushed me through."

#### WHAT I LEARNED A job well done will stand the test of time.

David Mitchell, 57, Sweet Pleasant Beach, New Jersey

"One summer, when I was 12, my mother devised a foolproof project to keep my brother and me out of trouble: In siding the family's two-car garage with cedar shingles. We prearranged, 'Sue Mom, we don't know how!' Her answer to that was to teach us everything we needed to know for the job: how to tear off the old shingles, lay out the new ones, and create a straightedge using a 1x2 measured to framing strips. She had learned it all from her father. She kept us motivated with the promise of \$30 each for a job well done and daily pep talks starting at 8 a.m. I recently drove past the old house, and the shingles still look good. Mom taught us well."

#### WHAT I LEARNED Electricity and water don't mix.

Timothy, 40, 1001 N. 10th St., Fort Lauderdale, Florida

"My mom was born in 1920 and raised on a farm. Her older brother knew electrical work and carpentry, and he passed some of that knowledge on to her. It came in handy when, as a teenager, I had to go under the house to work on a plumbing project. The wall was saturated, but I crawled under the house, dragging an old-style extension cord that had a magnetic box at the end. The cord was frayed and touched something wet, and I got quite a shock. I was scared to death! I crawled out, and my mom showed me how to make the box open, cut the bad wires, create a brand-new connection, and wrap the cords with electrical tape. Years later, I became a licensed electrician."

#### WHAT I LEARNED Let the hammer do the work.

Marcia Sharkey, 40, Chesapeake, D.C.

"Sawing 5-foot 4-inch with a shoulder-length blade saw, my mom didn't look like your average carpenter, but indeed that was her profession. When I was young, she taught me the proper way to work all sorts of tools. My favorite was her hammer, which she dubbed Clyde. If I showed

"The best DIY tip I got from my mom was to tackle projects while your spouse is away. And... all day long!"  
—Erika Schneider Weitz

"To keep from getting up a giant nest, punch holes around the rim with a flathead screwdriver. Any point that gets into the indentations drains back into the paint can."  
—Karen Anderson

"She taught me how to paint a room without having to tape everything off. First, paint the trim. Then, keep a wet edge when rolling the wall and use an angled brush to get a clean line against the trim. It takes a lot of practice but saves a lot of time."  
—Kylie Wolford

"How's a best tip? Mom: know you. Mom projects will take what it takes twice as long."  
—Lisa Cameron



Marcia Sharkey's mom, Susan, gives her past project (that's Clyde on the concrete).

her how to use my saw, Mom would demonstrate with exaggerated gusto to prove to me there was nothing to be afraid of. 'Let the hammer do the work!' she'd say. Luckily, when my husband was out of town, I got into up with the sappy DIY job my mom's generous owner had done on some drywall. So I grabbed my sledgehammer and, just like Mom had taught me, took a few big swings. That wall didn't stand a chance."

#### WHAT I LEARNED If it's broken, fix it. If you don't know how, ask.

David, 57, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

"My mother handled all the repairs for the 12-unit apartment building I grew up in. The job was intended for my father, a cabinet-maker in exchange for a break on the rent. But he had little time to be a superintendent, so Mom assumed the role. She fixed leaky faucets, faulty wiring, everything; she'd just ask, 'Dad how to do it or figure it out herself.' One day I looked inside the two jewelry boxes she kept on her dresser. One held small plumbing parts, knobs, drain plugs, screws. The other was filled with electrical wire, fuses, and outlet adapters. I never did find out where she kept her jewelry." ■



25

# CREATIVE KITCHEN UPGRADES

You don't need a soup-to-nuts remodel to spice up your kitchen. With the right ingredients—clever seating, statement lighting, color in unexpected places—you can get an updated look for not a lot of dough

BY MICHELLE BRUNNER

## PUT A TWIST ON TRADITION

- 1. Vibrant pedestal** Give old seats a new look by adding a pop of color. In this bold red, the dining table is a simple and inexpensive way to add a bit of color to an otherwise neutral color palette. Similar to vinyl, this is a protective plastic spray. (Click Dinet Orange, \$4, at homecenter.com)
- 2. Reflective backsplash** Give the kitchen a fresh look by adding a backsplash. In this case, the backsplash is made of reflective tiles that reflect light and create a bright, airy feel. (Click Dinet Orange, \$4, at homecenter.com)
- 3. Semi-flush mounts** Add a touch of modern style with semi-flush mounts. In this case, the semi-flush mounts are a simple and inexpensive way to add a bit of color to an otherwise neutral color palette. (Click Dinet Orange, \$4, at homecenter.com)



4



## DRAW ATTENTION WITH DETAILS

**4. Open-style island** To give the gap between island and cabinets a look with a modern twist, add a few open shelves. Here, the island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue.

**5. Bookshelves** To give the gap between island and cabinets a look with a modern twist, add a few open shelves. Here, the island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue.

**6. Bright book seats** To give the gap between island and cabinets a look with a modern twist, add a few open shelves. Here, the island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue.

Try to find seats that do a few things: \$5 each. [homedepot.com](http://www.homedepot.com)

## MAKE IT OPEN AND ELEGANT

**7. Floating shelves** To give the gap between island and cabinets a look with a modern twist, add a few open shelves. Here, the island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue.

**8. Painted pantry** To give the gap between island and cabinets a look with a modern twist, add a few open shelves. Here, the island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue.

**9. Booked edge over** To give the gap between island and cabinets a look with a modern twist, add a few open shelves. Here, the island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue.



## CREATE A RETRO VIBE

**10. Patchwork accent wall** To give the gap between island and cabinets a look with a modern twist, add a few open shelves. Here, the island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue.

**11. Old-school stools** To give the gap between island and cabinets a look with a modern twist, add a few open shelves. Here, the island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue.

**12. Painted floor** To give the gap between island and cabinets a look with a modern twist, add a few open shelves. Here, the island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue.

## ADD A FRENCH COUNTRY FEEL

**13. Range hood** To give the gap between island and cabinets a look with a modern twist, add a few open shelves. Here, the island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue.

**14. Island seat** To give the gap between island and cabinets a look with a modern twist, add a few open shelves. Here, the island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue.

**15. Warm plank floor** To give the gap between island and cabinets a look with a modern twist, add a few open shelves. Here, the island is a mix of white and light blue. The island is a mix of white and light blue.



## PUMP UP THE PERSONALITY

**16. Wall art** Warm up your cooking space with art inspired by the contents of your pantry. Get this look by framing vintage produce labels. [www.vintagegraph.com](http://www.vintagegraph.com)

**17. Repurposed table** Redefine the concept of the traditional kitchen island. A rustic wood top workbench or desk makes a great prep surface that's long on character. Search eBay or Craigslist for pieces similar to the one shown here. [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com) for as little as \$405.

**18. Nightlight pendant** Make a statement in a single dramatic light fixture. This multi-light number casts ample light on a kitchen workstation, so you won't need the overhead task light while prepping afternoon floral pots. Similar to shown: Europa 6 bulb frosted multi-light pendant, \$195, lampplus.com; wire cage shade, \$25, shadesoflight.com



## CRAFT A FARMHOUSE LOOK

**19. Soapstone sink** Save on a big ticket item like a soapstone sink by raising it on a sturdy base for discounted remnants or buying a slab from a dealer. Cut and assemble the sink yourself using a jig saw, epoxy, and free DIY assembly instructions online. 30 by 64 inch slab, \$520, soapstones.com

**20. Glass-front butch** Turn a stone, tough-to-cut into a kitchen island by installing the top with a stone masonry cutting tool and setting it to match. Similar to shown: Roman Kitchen Solutions. \$400, per ft.

**21. Patterned floor** Give a plain wood floor a rustic charm with a simple design of stained or painted diamonds. For the finish, you'll need to sand down to bare wood and use two coats of oil or wax. To learn how to tape off and paint a diamond design, watch the video at [diyhouse.com/may2014](http://diyhouse.com/may2014).

## BANQUETTES ON A BUDGET

**22. Repurposed storage cubes** Fasten inexpensive wood cubies together with screws, and frame the front with 1x4s. Add a coat of paint and a cushion. [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com) for as little as \$169, [getthisidea.com](http://getthisidea.com)

**23. Planter bench** Pull up a pair of backless benches with tapety supports, or hit up the home center for turned wood legs and build a bench with plywood and cutting. 58 inch wood seaming, \$9.50, lowes.com

**24. Simple platform** Build a basic banquette from a board of 2x4s, clad with paint-grade 1/4 inch plywood. Layer a 1x2 over a 1x4 to create the stepped up trim.

**25. Upholstered back** Create a kitchen conversation piece by repurposing a table covered headboard with nailhead trim. Or custom build one at your own. To find the how to, go to [diyhouse.com/may2014](http://diyhouse.com/may2014).



# 19

## BUDGET-FRIENDLY BATH IDEAS

In the confines of this grooming zone, a small investment can make a big splash. These fresh takes on wainscoting, tile, flooring, and more make it easy to trade up to one-of-a-kind style

BY MICHELLE BRUNNER

### GO FOR AN ECLECTIC MIX

- 1 Salvaged shutters:** For a breezy, shabby-chic look, use up old shutters to create a headboard. You can find them at flea markets, antique stores, or online. Look for ones that are in good condition and have a nice finish. You can also find them at hardware stores, but they may be more expensive.
- 2 Subway wall:** A classic subway tile wall is a great way to add a touch of modernity to a bathroom. You can find them at hardware stores, but they may be more expensive.
- 3 Mixed-material floor:** A mix of materials, such as wood, tile, and stone, can create a unique and interesting look. You can find them at hardware stores, but they may be more expensive.



SHUTTERS: JESSICA WILSON; TILE: JESSICA WILSON; FLOOR: JESSICA WILSON



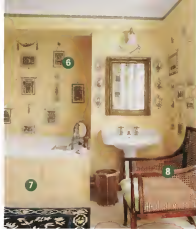
### UPDATE THE CLASSICS

#### 4. Beadboard canopy

For a classic, timeless look, a beadboard canopy is a great choice. You can find them at hardware stores, but they may be more expensive. They are also a great way to add a touch of modernity to a bathroom.

#### 5. Shaker-style sink

A shaker-style sink is a classic choice for a bathroom. You can find them at hardware stores, but they may be more expensive. They are also a great way to add a touch of modernity to a bathroom.



## EMBRACE PERIOD DETAIL

**6. Distinctive decal** Dress up your wall with a period-appropriate and girly decal. It features a French-style, hand-painted, delicate, red and white, ornate, floral, and scrollwork design. It's a perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.

**7. Painted tub surround** Give a new, old-fashioned tub a modern, unexpected twist. Paint the tub surround in a color that matches the tub. It's a perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.

**8. Handmade seating** If you have a period-style tub, you'll want to match it with a period-style chair. A perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.

## INTRODUCE CLEVER FEATURES

**9. Concealed curtain rod** Instead of a rod, use a hidden rod. It's a perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.

**10. Mirror ledge** If you have a period-style tub, you'll want to match it with a period-style chair. A perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.

**11. Wood wall** If you have a period-style tub, you'll want to match it with a period-style chair. A perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.



## ADD UNEXPECTED COLOR

**12. Dream-style pendant** If you have a period-style tub, you'll want to match it with a period-style chair. A perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.

**13. Shaker peg rail** Turn your wall into a shaker-style peg rail. It's a perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.

**14. Red hot towel rack** Take a modern twist on a period-style towel rack. It's a perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.

**15. Stained glass** If you have a period-style tub, you'll want to match it with a period-style chair. A perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.

## WALLET-FRIENDLY WAINSCOTING

**16. Colorful tile** If you have a period-style tub, you'll want to match it with a period-style chair. A perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.

**17. White wainscoting** If you have a period-style tub, you'll want to match it with a period-style chair. A perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.

**18. Copper wainscoting** If you have a period-style tub, you'll want to match it with a period-style chair. A perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.

**19. Brass wainscoting** If you have a period-style tub, you'll want to match it with a period-style chair. A perfect addition to a period-style bathroom. \$20 for 10x10 in. from the same company.



# <ALL ABOUT> Pro-Style Ranges

You don't need to be an Iron Chef to fall for the allure of a pro-style cooker. TOH explains how to pick the right one for your space, cooking style, and budget **BY HOA CHANG**

**FEW THINGS DEFINE** an upscale kitchen like one of these heavy-duty beauties. With heavy cast-iron grates, beefy knobs and handles, and high-Btu burners, the pro-style range fits beside the modern-day hearth: a dramatic focal point in the home's main gathering place. Of course, one of these serious stoves can boost your cooking prowess, too—or to enhance your home's resale value.

Industrial-style appliances started gaining ground in the 1980s, when homeowners began looking for stainless ranges to get more burners, more power, and more pro features, like built-in griddles and grills. But at up to 36 inches front from front to back, these behemoths didn't fit neatly into your average cook space. They also lacked beauty and became dangerously hot.

Enter the "pro style" solution. Scaled to fit standard-depth counters, these models won't burn down the house, thanks to beefed-up insulation. But they hoggy burners still heat out 18,000 to 23,000 Btus—versus a basic range's 12,000 Btus—for searing and sautéing, while their smallest burners deliver a gentle simmer, perfect for soups, stews, and melting butter.

Of course, a pro-style range is a small investment. We'll walk you through all the options and considerations, so you'll know just what to look for when you're ready for this serious kitchen upgrade.

## THE POWER BURNER

A hallmark of pro-style ranges is at least one big beef burner that can blast out 18,000 to 23,000 Btus (British thermal units), a measure of energy. Different manufacturers use different designs to deliver the heat in unique patterns. This burner relies on two stacked stainless-steel rings with gas jets to put out a full spectrum of heat, from low to high.



With its stainless steel body and top-quality details, some single-range units at home in almost any style of kitchen. Shown: Wolf 36-inch range. \$6,500; others will cost

## VITALS

### WHAT SIZE?

Most pro-style ranges come in standard widths of 30, 36, 48, and 60 inches. Larger widths mean more burners or other cooking options, such as griddles, woks, and more oven space too. The oven is a 36-inch wide handle, meaning trays, 48- and 60-inch models can fit two trays.

### HOW MUCH DO THEY COST?

You can pay \$1,500 to \$1,800 for a 30-inch range, depending on the features and model.

### WHAT IF IT BREAKS?

Expect to get at least 20 years out of your investment, but features like electronic burner ignitors can be extremely costly to replace when they fail. A lot of finding companies to service some lesser-known brands can be difficult.

### GAS OR ELECTRIC?

While pro-style ranges are always gas, they can be converted to electric. Gas offers options known as "dual fuel." Electric ovens offer more cooking modes and more oven heat but can add as much as \$2,000 to the cost. Some cooks prefer gas ovens for better searing heat. Most pro-style gas ovens don't self-clean and broil as efficiently as \$1,000-plus



Marble-top  
with offset handles  
look showy. 48-inch  
gas burnings.  
\$4,999. daniel.com

## Before you buy

High-power ranges come with some special considerations. Here are the basics to keep in mind

### 1 Assess your ventilation.

Pro-style power produces pro-style burning, color, carbon monoxide, and, if a recipe goes wrong, smoke. So a vent hood that exhausts outside is a must. The more Btus the range puts out, the more air—measured in cubic feet per minute, or cfm—the blower needs to be able to move. (Find a calculator for sizing a hood to your range and particular installation at [thisoldhouse.com/may2014](http://thisoldhouse.com/may2014).) If possible, buy a hood from the same manufacturer and line as the range to ensure a good match.

### 2 Check your supply line.

A pro-style range can be fueled by either natural gas or propane. Manufacturers' recommendations for gas-line size vary, from 3/4 inch to 1 1/2 inch, always check the specifications. Dual-fuel requires a 240-volt electrical line.

**3 Measure it.** A typical entry doorway is 36 inches wide, so if you opt for a bigger range, have a plan to get it into the house before the delivery truck pulls up. Weight can be an issue too. Some ovenless ranges with cast-iron components weigh more than

300 pounds. Floor joists may need reinforcement to safely withstand the heavy load.

### 4 Be prepared for the heat.

The cook space gets pretty toasty when you're blasting up to six-powert burners, plus a griddle or grill, sometimes all at once. Proper ventilation helps, of course, but you'll also want to buy heavy-bottomed pans that are several inches larger than the burners so that the heat isn't put bypassing them. Keep in mind, too, that the heavy cast-iron grates that are standard on most of these ranges radiate more heat than traditional steel grates and can take an hour or so to cool off completely. Handle them with caution during cleanup.

### 5 Test it. Look for a retailer

that has the floor models connected to live gas so that you can give them a test drive—and not just by turning them on. Bad waxes, fry an egg, or try melting a bar of chocolate and keeping it glossy instead of having it run greasy. Some showrooms also have chef demos on pro-techniques, such as roasting aparagus on a griddle or making a roast in a steam oven.

## BURNER BASICS

The facts behind the flames

**HIGH BTUS** The signature feature of any pro-style range is one or more burners capable of super high-heat for searing, broiling, and fast boiling. But don't get too hung up on the number of Btus. For most home chefs, 38,000-Btus is plenty hot. Remember, too, that a bigger number doesn't necessarily translate to better performance—it all depends on the quality of the burner and controls.

**LOW SUMMER** Equally important is a burner that can handle delicate tasks like simmering an unlidded pot of chili all afternoon without bringing it to a boil—or a burn. Different manufacturers use different technologies to achieve a steady even heat, typically putting out 350 to 850 Btus. So be sure to test the simmer before you buy.

**CLOSED BURNERS** The vast majority of ranges offer sealed burners, which means the entire range top allows no place for spills or grease to drip down into the stove. As a result, grease positioned so that the gas flows out to the side, then up, slightly reducing efficiency but making cleanup a relatively painless task.



**OPEN BURNERS** In this setup (like the BlueStar burner above), gas jets shoot straight up from a burner that is suspended over an enameled, driving in lots of oxygen to fuel the flames. Pots and pans heat fast and evenly—but spills collect in a drip pan beneath the burner that must be removed for cleaning.

## Six eye-catching picks

From small to supersized, colorful to traditional, these pro-style ranges will make any kitchen shine

**1 RED HOT** This splashy all-gas Bertazzoni range dresses up rugged stainless steel with fiery engine-red enamel. Its 30-inch frame has four sealed burners and a gas-convection oven. Also available in six other color options, \$3,999. [www.bertazzoni.com](http://www.bertazzoni.com)

**2 SMART AND STYLISH** This sturdy 36-inch model had GE Monogram range control without sealed burners; reversible cast-iron grates can be flipped to fit a wok pan. A handy control guide provides a continuous surface for parking hot pots. \$5,499. [monogram.com](http://monogram.com)

**3 SUPER SLEEK** Two pairs of embedded cooktops as electric griddles on this 36-inch gas model from Thermador. The size-shaped burners are designed for better cooking; their heat has burner settings that hold temperatures as low as 100 degrees F. \$4,499. [thermador.com](http://thermador.com)

**4 TRIMMED UP** This dual-fuel while-enamel and stainless steel beauty from five comes in a retro 40-inch size. Remove the grates on two sides via open burners for a grill/broiler. Convert via other colors and with the addition of broiler, grill, or charcoal broil. \$5,249. [thermaplanes.com](http://thermaplanes.com)

**5 CHEF FAVORITE** This 48-inch BlueStar range has two gas-convection (one a convection) and eight open burners including two that hit a searing 28,000 Btus. Char broiler and griddle inserts are interchangeable; swap in as needed. Comes in 750 colors and finishes. \$6,999. [www.bluestarcooking.com](http://www.bluestarcooking.com)

**6 MODA MODEL** Looking for an easy? This 48-inch Capital will char-grill gas range pots the job done with its open burners and dual convection ovens. Lift the cover to expose a 24-inch griddle or grill. \$24,529. [capitalcooking.com](http://capitalcooking.com)





## Know your range

Which setup you choose depends on the size of your kitchen, cooking ambitions, and budget. Tour a typical 48-inch to take a closer look at some standard features and interesting options

### GRILL OPTION

Taking the space of two burners, this slotted grate sits on a propane flame.

Demand a robust ventilation hood and an exhaust fan to handle the smoke. Burners, heat diffusers, and drip pans are usually dishwasher safe for cleanup.

### CONTINUOUS GRATES

Interlocking pieces of cast-iron let pots slide easily between burners.

### SIMMER SUPPHER

Pulls out actively, gentle flame (generally from 250 to 850 Btus) for low-heat tasks like melting butter.



**CHOOSE YOUR SETUP** At 30 inches, you have the option of electric burners and a propane grill. Go bigger and get both a double-griddle, or even the French top (shown on opposite page).



### INFRARED BROILER

A rectangular heating element at the top of the oven radiates energy waves through the oven cavity, heating food faster and more evenly than a conventional broiler does, with no preheating. Available only in gas models.

### STEAM OPTION

In a standard fuel range with two ovens, one can be programmed to deliver a "steam assist" either instead of or in addition to the electric coil. Temperatures are at least 160°F for roasting beautifully. Requires a water line.



### GRIDDLE OPTION

A flat stainless-steel surface—sometimes with a super-tough enamel coating—ideal for everything from scrambling eggs to cooking shrimp plate-style. A dishwasher-safe drip pan collects grease. Takes the place of two burners, so is available only on 36-inch or larger ranges. Can sometimes be ordered double-wide.

### BOILER BURNER

High heat element that can put out from 38,000 to 25,000 Btus. Ideal for searing, sautéing, and boiling.

### KNOS

Notchy dial, a signature feature of these ranges, should turn smoothly and afford precise control of the burners.

### CONVECTION

One or more fans circulate heat within the oven cavity for even cooking. Standard in at least one oven.

### GLIDE RACKS

Full-bearing tracks, stainless-steel insert, high end ranges, let stainless-steel oven racks slide out smoothly—even when holding a 25-pound turkey. Not all racks are created equal, of course, so test them.

## THE FRENCH-TOP OPTION

Why pro chefs love this versatile burner

The French top replaces four burners with a cast-iron plate ideal for cooking with multiple pots at different temperatures at the same time. Beneath the plate sits a cooler high-Btu burner that radiates heat outward from the center, so you can, say, boil water in the middle and simmer a sauce toward the edge. As such, it suits the fast-paced cooking of a restaurant kitchen. But because the flame is concealed, it can be hard to know when the metal is hot. And the plate may discolor quickly with use—not a problem where the range sits on a display.



High heat area for boiling, sautéing. Low heat area for simmering, basting, or roasting.

## MOPPING UP THE MESS

How to clean your showpiece

These stainless-steel beauties may sparkle in the showroom, but keeping them that way at home takes a little TLC. First and most important: remove spills and grease pronto to avoid buildup. Wipe down cast-iron grates with soapy water, soak them if needed. Avoid abrasives, bleach, and the dishwasher to preserve the grates' enamel coating, which protects the cast iron against rust. Towel dry for the same reason. If you do risk the coating, rub vegetable oil onto the exposed metal.

Use a specialty stainless-steel cleaner and a soft cloth, wiping in the direction of the grain on appropriate metal surfaces.

No self-cleaning oven? Put a pan of water inside and set the temperature on high heat for about an hour to loosen built-up gunk, wipe out the interior with a damp cloth or sponge and mild detergent as needed.

## Beyond industrial chic

These high-performance ranges trade the restaurant look for vintage charm, with many of the features found in pro-style models



**ANTIQUE LOOK** Modern-style range meets vintage utility in the Diners 2800-ST Copper Wire and a featured Black Enamel stove up a cooking with four gas and two electric burners. In a standing field, the top control controls slight variations in the single flame to work (the three doors are really one) \$8,200. [dinersranges.com](http://dinersranges.com)



**BRITISH BEAUTY** A contemporary update on the old cast-iron cast-iron model. This handsome range is forged of solid steel with a high-gloss enamel finish. It has three gas burners and three separate oven compartments, including a top broiler. In the finishes: \$5,800. [ag-ranges.com](http://ag-ranges.com)



**BRASS-TRIMMED** This stainless-steel range is hand-assembled in France, comes with the high heat burner's ring, and a large burner in the center (labeled) or a classic French top. One gas oven and one electric oven standard. They also include brass-chrome and nickel, as well as stainless-steel. In the finishes: \$7,800. [frenchranges.com](http://frenchranges.com)

# RETROfit Your Kitchen



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**65**  
tips, tricks, and  
answers to  
your home-  
improvement  
questions

**Q** I'd like to plant a vegetable garden in an area with very rocky soil. Is it a hopeless dream?

—JOHN WATSON, WILMINGTON, OHIO

**A** Hey, at all. One option is to fill in the rocks with a soil amendment, like the one at left. Or, better yet, you'll find it easier to start a raised bed out of heavy timbers and fill it with a compost-rich soil 12 inches deep by 12 feet long. (The 12 inches is the depth of the soil in the raised bed.)

—JAMES HAMILTON, CHICAGO  
Photo: © Jeff Schmitt

Percent of references experts



**TOM SILVA**  
General Contractor



**NORM CARUSO**  
Master Carpenter



**RICHARD TRETHEWEY**  
Plumbing and Roofing Expert



**ROGER COOK**  
Landscaping Consultant



**KEVIN O'DONNELL**  
Painter

## Our 40-year-old cedar-shingle siding is in excellent shape, except where it meets the roof. How do I replace the rotting shingles?

—KIMMEYLOUSUR, PLYMOUTH, MASS.



When prying damaged shingles off a roof, Tom Silva starts at the top and works his way down.

**TOM SILVA REPLIES:** There must be water splashing onto that section of siding, so ask a roofer to assess how to redirect it and fix the roof problem. As for replacing those shingles, that will be easy. Pry off the rotten ones in the top course first, then any on the course below, and so on, until you hit non-rotting shingles. Next, check the condition of the sheathing underneath. If there's a leaky spot, cut out the sheathing well beyond it to make sure the leak causing the rot hasn't gotten a foothold.

Now go out and buy enough shingles of the same length and species as the originals to cover the exposed area. If you're going to paint or stain them, buy factory-painted shingles or take the time to stain or prime them, front and back. This step helps extend a shingle's life and finish.

With the rotted wood gone and the sheathing solid, wrap the builder's felt over the exposed area, making sure to overlap the existing felt or house wrap by at least 6 inches. Then, starting at the horizontal corner where shingles are missing, place a new shingle next to an old one, line up its bottom edge—the butt edge—with its neighbor's, making sure the side joints are staggered with those of the course below by at least 1½ inches. Red-oak shingles, like the ones at left, are very stable and don't need much of any gap between them, but with white oak, leave a ¼-inch gap.

Fasten each shingle with two nails, each about 1½ inch from the edge and 1 inch above the butt at the course above. If you tack a strap batten to the wall, even with the butt edge of the course you're working on, you can rest each shingle on it to cut the contact overlap as you go. Follow the same procedure as you work your way up.

For the top courses, you have to cut down each shingle to fit against the soffit. Try this trick: Flip the shingle and hold its butt edge against the soffit, use a utility knife and a square to score it where it crosses the course's butt line, and snap off the top. If the last course is particularly narrow, you'll be cutting through a thicker part of shingle, so you may need to score both sides to get a clean snap. When the last course is installed, hide the nails with a fascia board. Look or feel them are right against the underside of the soffit.

### What is it?

• Clamp for sharpening mower blades

• Sawhorse vise

• Joint hook

• Rebar strap/tieover

FOR THE EQUIPMENT, SEE PAGE 102



If this chimney's shoulder bricks had been sloped, water would not have seeped in and frozen, causing this spalling.

never needs re-mortaring, just keep it clean, and your tiles will have a static coefficient of friction of 0.49, which is a fancy way of saying they will exceed the standards for slip resistance set by the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). Slip Guard won't alter the tile's color, but it leaves a matte sheen. The company also makes anti-slip products for stone, porcelain, and quarry tile floors.

### Crumbling bricks

In snowy places around the exterior of our 1960 house, the bricks are crumbling away. And as soon as we replace them, others fall apart. What's going on and what can be done about it?

—LUC ANDERBARN, THORNTON, BETH CO., PA.

### Slip-resistant tile

The ceramic tiles in our entry hall are slippery as ice when they get wet. Is there a way to rough them up so that they aren't so dangerous? I can't use a mat. It would interfere with the door.

—JIMMY BAILEY, BUFFALO, N.Y.

**MARK FERRANTE REPLIES:** A lot of people have this problem with old kitchen and bathroom floors. My advice is to treat the floors with Slip Guard for ceramic tile (slipguard.com). It's applied in a conveniently three-step process that forms a permanent bond with the tile. You can walk on it immediately, and it

The contractor Mark Ferrante of Perseus Tile has worked on This Old House TV projects for 15 years.

**KEVIN O'DONNELL REPLIES:** I took your question to Chip Clark, vice president of organizing services at The Brick Industry Association, and showed him all the pictures you sent. His diagnosis is fairly straightforward: A flawed bricks are being saturated with water, which is expanding as freezing weather and causing the brick faces to spall, or break off. Once a brick spalls, the entire mortar is exposed, making it

even more vulnerable to water infiltration and deterioration. The damaged bricks will have to be replaced, using better materials and brick-laying practices.

For instance, Clark notes that the chimney shoulders (shown) are laid like masonry, giving water another way to seep in. They need to be rebuilt so that each shoulder has an outer layer of bricks that slopes at least 15 degrees and a flashing to allow water to flow away from the house.

This kind of work is best done by an experienced mason, Clark says, and he recommends using the following materials: new, grade S-W bricks, without cores (holes), no softeners; the severe weather where you live, and latex-modified mortar, which has extra flexibility and a higher bond than standard cement mortar.

After the new bricks are in place and the mortar is dry, brack or spray a water repellent over all the brickwork. Clark recommends using products made of silicate or siloxane, such as Silox Seal (siloxane.com). These coatings aren't permanent—the product should be reapplied every seven to 10 years—and may add a slight sheen, but they'll help keep your brickwork dry and in good shape.

# Hot water, bad smell

My hot water smells like rotten eggs, and the water heater is only a couple of years old. Is there any way to get rid of the horrible odor?

—SUE PALMER, CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OHIO

**RICHARD TRETHEWEY REPLIES:** Fortunately, there is. And it's a pretty simple fix, too. The smell comes from a microscopic bacterium living inside your water, called water heaters, happily attaching on the anodes and hydrogen atoms in the water and burping out hydrogen sulfide gas, the stuff that causes that rotten-egg smell. The anodes and the bacteria, though otherwise harmless, are regularly found in untreated well water, not municipal systems. The hydrogen ions come from the worst heater's magnesium or aluminum anode rod, which stops the inside of your heater from rusting away.

One way that issue can crop up without warning is if you leave your tank on while away on vacation, giving the bacteria a chance to take over.

The easiest way to make the smell go away is to sanitize the inside of the tank and replace the anode. In most cases, a replacement rod made of a zinc-tricalcium alloy is your best bet for snuffing out the smell because zinc and tin have greater antimicrobial properties than pure aluminum or magnesium.

First, shut off the tank's water supply and its electricity or gas supply. Open a hot-water faucet at a tank to relieve pressure in the tank, and use the bibb on the tank to drain a couple of gallons of water. But leave the tank nearly full—a heavy tank will hold still as you torque the rod.

Now find the rod's location on the top of the heater. It may be hidden under a cap or

the tank's lid. Anode rods are necessarily difficult to crack loose, so round up a helper, a 1/2-inch socket and the longest sockets-wrench handle you can find, and a 3-foot length of steel pipe. While the helper holds the tank, crack the nut counterclockwise. If it refuses to budge, slip the pipe over the wrench handle for leverage. Do not bang on the rod or the vessels, you might damage the tank's internal lining. When the nut comes loose, lift it and the attached rod out of the tank. To kill the bacteria and any lingering odor, pour in a few pints of 3 percent sodium hydrogen peroxide.

Wrap the threads on the new rod free or run ones with plumber's tape, then seal into the hole, use an oil and replace the cap or lid. Reconnect the power or hot supply—and re-light the pilot, if necessary—and crank up the tank temperature to 140 degrees for 10 to 18 hours to deliver the

final blow to any bacteria that may be lurking. Finally, open the water supply valve for the tank, turn the temperature back down to 125 degrees, and fill up a bathtub to purge the tank of any pipe-scale odor.

If, after all that, the rotten-egg smell comes back, consider investing in a water-treatment system to kill the bacteria before they reach the tank.

# Uneven yard

I'd like to level my backyard. How do I "read" the topography so that I know how far out to level it is?

—SAL MASLOVA, MILLER PLACE, N.Y.

**ROGER COOK REPLIES:** There are some very simple ways to check grade using low-cost tools. The least expensive is a line level, which consists of a small spirit level hooked

onto mason's line. You can get both items for less than \$10 at any hardware store. Here's how to proceed:

1. Drive a stake into the ground at each end of the area you want to check.
2. Tie the line to one stake and pull it as tight as possible around the other stake.
3. Hook the line level onto the midpoint, and raise or lower one end of the mason's line outside the level's bubble centered. Having an assistant help you with this step will be a real time-saver. Tie off the loose end of the line on the stake at this point.

Differences in slope will be obvious, but if you want to quantify them, just measure from the line to the ground. You can repeat this process at various locations to get an overall sense of grade change. Measuring down from a level mason's line is essentially the same slope-checking principle that builders use with more

sophisticated tools, though not as precise.

For \$30 and a bag map up in accuracy, you can buy a water level, which is an air method to use if you're working alone. The home-center version consists of 25 feet of clear, flexible plastic tubing and an electronic sensor. You fill the tube with water, connect one end to the sensor, and it drives markers where the water level is both ends of the tube is the same. Then it's just a matter of measuring down from that point to the ground. You can easily move the free end of the tube to several locations to record differences in grade.

If you want to check a grade the way the pros do, rent an optical or a laser level. These tools are more accurate and better suited to finding a lot of different points quickly. In concept, though, they do pretty much the same things as simpler tools.

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## Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

### Crowns for a saggy ceiling

I'd like to get crown molding in our master bedroom, but the ceiling has a fairly noticeable dip along one wall. Is there a way to camouflage the unevenness?

—MARGARET ROCKPORT, MD

**NORM ABRAHAM REPLIES:** You can't really camouflage sag with crown. But you might be able to draw the eye away from it, if the sag isn't too great.

To determine how much the ceiling sags, hold a scriber of the crown in place at one corner and mark its bottom edge. Do the same in the opposite corner, and snap a line between the marks. Measure up from the line to find the sag's lowest point, then subtract that number from the distance between the line and the ceiling at the corners to get the amount of sag. If it's less than an inch, a standard 4½-inch crown can probably be cranked into position with some careful twisting and planing. But a sag of an inch or more means the ceiling should be leveled first.

For a ceiling with minimal sag, I'd snap a line of white chalk half the amount of the sag down from the previous line to define where the bottom of the molding should land. It doesn't have to be level. Then I'd scribble and plane the tops to fit the sag, and plane the top level until the crown fits tight to the ceiling at the low spot—but I wouldn't go any deeper than halfway into the flat area at the top of the crown. To keep the crown's bottom edge on the baseline at the high spots, I push the top of the crown slightly toward the wall and plane the lower level on the back until the bottom edge is tight to the wall. That makes mitering and coping very challenging. I highly recommend that you turn the job over to a good trim carpenter.

If ceiling sag needs to be leveled, the best approach is to replace it. After it's popped out, sister 2x4s to the stud of the exposed joist so that they're level and even with the low spot. Then, to help define the joist, screw 1x4s strapping every 16 inches perpendicular to the bottom of the 2x4s. I'd also install extra strapping

at the walls parallel to the joists to make nailing the crown easier. Finally, screw the drywall to the strapping. With the new ceiling in place, the crown will be a cinch to install.

### Annoying concrete dosestop

Last winter, the concrete outside our entry lifted up so high that it blocked the screen door. The pad has since settled back down, but what can we do to stop this from happening again?

—TAMARA WEAVER, EAST LANSING, MI

**TOM SILVA REPLIES:** Blame the second cold for your inconvenience. The water in the soil under the concrete froze for so long that it created an ice feedback enough to heave up the concrete. That's probably been happening to the rest of the walkway, too. If the sag really could settle without your noticing, but this year's prolonged cold created a low big enough to reach your doorway.

To prevent this from happening again, you'll have to improve the drainage under the pad so that there won't be ice to heave it up. You do that by removing at least part of the pad closest to the door and replacing the soil underneath with crushed stone. Then, cut the concrete at a point beyond the arc

of the door's swing. Then, using a sledgehammer or an electric jackhammer, break up the concrete and move it out of the way.

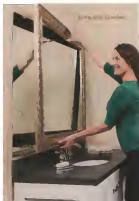
Now dig down about 9 to 10 inches. Cover this hole with landscape fabric to keep the soil out of the scene. Dump 4 inches of ¾-inch crushed stone onto the fabric and tamp it level. On the sides, install 2x6s laid in place with 1x4s on top. Next to the foundation and the existing pavement, place expansion strips; they'll allow the pad to move independently of the house and the rest of the walkway. Cover the stone with about 2 inches of fresh concrete, lay galvanized reinforcing mesh on it, and immediately fill the form to the top with more concrete, then smooth it out. After the concrete sets, remove the 2x6s and your problem should be solved.

## Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

Go to [thisoldhouse.com/asktho](http://thisoldhouse.com/asktho)

Or write to: Ask This Old House, This Old House magazine, 135 West 50th Street, New York, NY 10020

Include a complete address and daytime phone number. Published questions will be edited for clarity and length and may be used in other media. We regret that because of the volume of mail received, we're unable to reply to unprinted questions only.



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## Ask THIS OLD HOUSE



## Norm's tricks of the trade

**I have some wood shelf brackets held in place with recessed screws. I'd like to add more screws for increased support, but how do I recess the heads?**

—EILEEN LORIE TULLAGHAN, TOWN

**A** To recess any screwhead, you make a cone-shaped recess called a counterbore. The traditional way to do this is with a dedicated bit, which allows you to make counterbores of different diameters. Here's how:



Counterbore

**1 Drill a pilot hole for the screws.** Then, with the counterbore bit centered in the hole and perpendicular to the surface, run the drill at high speed without applying much pressure. This is how you get a clean counterbore with no tear-out.

**2 To get the screwhead perfectly flush,** it'll be shallower than needed and place the screwhead over the hole to see how much farther you need to go. Drill a little deeper and check again. By breaking up on the correct depth, there's less risk of going too deep. ■

### GET ANSWERS!

If you have a **blu** that would answer Norm's or any of the questions, it will be in a chance to appear in October's *Ask This Old House* issue. To get ideas like this page, go to [bluhomes.com/pa0101](http://bluhomes.com/pa0101)

# This Old House blueprint

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## Ask This Old House Renovates a Townhouse Kitchen

In an upcoming episode, *Ask This Old House* will completely renovate a suburban townhouse kitchen, giving our readers and viewers a handy "101" guide to remodeling their own kitchens.



**Before:** With mismatched appliances and a lack of workspace, this dark cramped kitchen was ready to need an update.

**After:** Smart design choices—adding a peninsula to increase the storage and counter space (U. Joergin & Co. Metrology cabinetry by **Cabinets To Go**) adding a leafy backsplash giving the room a fresh coat of neutral paint—not only make the room appear larger and brighter, but create a more functional space.



Swivel stool appliances, a high-end choice (Kraft by **Moen**) and new nickel finish hardware elevate the space.

To see an expanded photo gallery of this project, go to [thisoldhouse.com/ask-kitchen](http://thisoldhouse.com/ask-kitchen), and tune in the May to watch the renovation unfold on PBS television, or visit [thisoldhouse.com/watchATOH](http://thisoldhouse.com/watchATOH)

### SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS



## Event Spotlight Design & Construction Week, Las Vegas

For the first time, the International Builders' Show (IBS) and the Kitchen & Bath Industry Show (KBIS) were combined into Design & Construction Week, with over 1,700 exhibitors and 75,000 attendees from across the globe. T.O.H. master carpenter Norm Abrams was on hand at this year's show, greeting fans, signing autographs, and answering home improvement questions.



Norm takes the stage for a Q&A at **Carpenter**

Fans at the **AKKH** booth eagerly await their turn to meet Norm.



Norm takes part with fans at **Lumber Liquidators**

Norm stops to chat with Mark and Theresa at the home improvement retailer **Myrtle's**



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# SAVE THIS OLD HOUSE

**PRICE** \$2 (must be moved)

**LOCATION** Greensland, North Carolina

**CONTACT** Claudia Conway  
252-452-7455

**THE HISTORY** After a fire destroyed the longtime home of tobacco baron Joseph John Laughinghouse in 1905, he and his wife, Eliza, decided to sell their 1,000-acre plantation. The land, which had been in Joseph's family for more than 100 years, contained some of the finest tobacco-growing soil around. Brothers Clarence and William Penick, tobaccoists by trade, bought the parcel for \$250,000 and had so much success farming it that William was able to buy out Clarence's share and pay off the bank in only seven years. Around 1916, William built the grand farmhouse on the site of the original house, and he lived there with his wife and daughter, both named Louise. The house stayed in the family until 2011, when the owner of an adjacent property bought the estate for the land. He was offering the house to anyone willing to move it.

**WHY SAVE IT?** The neoclassical house retains late-Victorian details, including multiple window bays, two patterned brick chimneys, and a 1,086-square-foot porch. Eight mantels and tiled ceilings around each of the 27 windows are among the elaborate features inside.

**WHAT IT NEEDS** Aside from lacking egress second-floor exits, the house is in reasonable shape. The kitchen and bath are in working order but should be updated, along with the exterior after the house is moved. Greensland, 12 miles from Greenville, is a town of fewer than 500 people. Nearby lots start around \$250,000—or, for \$1.5 million, you can buy an 80-acre parcel down the road and farm an estate all your own. —NAB, HOP



**FREE!**  
A tobacco baron's  
farmhouse



1) The 6,262-square-foot house has two bedrooms and two and-a-half bathrooms. 2) It retains original exterior details, including Doric columns and the center gable's high-soffit shingles. 3) The staircase has an ornate balustrade and colorful patterned stair treads. 4) A balcony is tucked under the center gable. 5) French doors filled with numerous dove lightbulbs line the dining room.



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